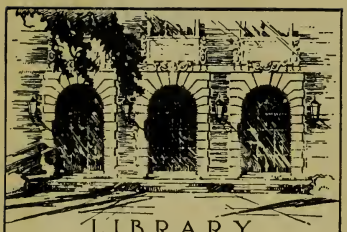

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THE MASTER OF ST. BENEDICT'S

BY

ALAN St. AUBYN

AUTHOR OF

'A FELLOW OF TRINITY,' 'THE JUNIOR DEAN,' 'THE OLD MAID'S SWEETHEART,' 'MODEST LITTLE SARA,' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

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THE

MASTER OF ST. BENEDICT'S

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE LANE.

'The rain was raining cheerfully,
As if it had been May.'

Lucy was five minutes late the next morning in keeping her appointment—at least, her understood appointment—in the lane. There was a reasonable excuse for it. It was not a morning fit for a dog to go out in. It was a shivering, blowy, rainy morning. There are not many trees at Newnham, and what few there are tossed their arms wildly in the air, and sighed and moaned as the wind whistled

through the leaves. They had not shed many tears as yet; they were fresh young leaves with the tender green of the year upon them, but they were shedding a great many to-day.

After this night of weeping they would never be the same leaves again; they would have grown darker and sadder; they would have begun to shiver by night and whisper by day. They were whispering overhead as Lucy stood beneath them, with her umbrella turning inside out, looking up and down the lane.

The man she was looking for was not there. His bed-maker, who was certainly a seer or a sibyl, had found him an hour before under the table of his room, with his lamp still burning, and the liqueur-case in his cellaret—at least, it was on the table—empty, quite empty.

She had fetched Eric, who was up betimes reading for his 'special,' and between them they had put him to bed, and Eric had come out in the wind and the rain to keep his appointment.

Lucy wasn't looking for Eric. She took no notice of the little fellow in a covert-coat who was sheltering behind the hedge. She was looking for a splendid manly form, clad in a big Inverness coat, perhaps, and indifferent to the wind and the rain.

Eric joined her directly she got outside the gate.

'I have just come from the lodge,' he said. 'The Master has passed a better night. He has had several hours' sleep.'

Lucy looked at him with a question in her eyes that had nothing to do with the Master.

'Why didn't Mr. Edgell come?' she said almost sharply. 'Why did he send you?'

Eric couldn't look into her eyes and tell her a fib. They were such clear, straightforward eyes, they seemed to look quite through him.

'Edgell is working for his Tripos,' he said evasively. 'He has only a few days longer before him.'

'He isn't working at this time in the morning?' said Lucy, looking straight at him.

He couldn't meet her eyes. He looked up admiringly at the red-brick front of Newnham as if he had never seen it before.

'No,' he said; 'he is not working now—he is——'

'I know what he is, without your trying to shield him,' Lucy interrupted with fine scorn. 'He is lying most likely drunk and incapable on the floor, or he is raving on his bed, and seeing hideous things. Oh, Mr. Gwatkin, what is the good of your friendship if you cannot keep him from this?'

Eric hung his head.

'He is beyond my keeping,' he said sadly. 'He is beyond the reach of my poor prayers. God knows I pray for him night and day!'

Lucy didn't say that she had been praying for him that very morning, that she had only just got off her knees, and come out in the rain to meet him.

'Will nothing save him?' she said, wringing her hands.

'Yes,' Eric said slowly, looking at her with troubled eyes; 'there is one thing that would save him.'

She looked up at him, and their eyes met, and her heart gave a great bound, and something seemed to surge up in her ears, and swim before her eyes, and choke in her throat. She wasn't quite sure for a minute if anything had happened to her; and when her heart beat again, and the wave went back, and the trees and the college ceased to go round, Eric was looking down at her with his troubled eyes, and his weak lips quivering as he spoke.

'The one thing that would save him would entail sacrifice—the sacrifice of a life—and only a noble woman could make it——'

'You mean,' she said, speaking hoarsely—that lump in her throat hadn't gone yet—'you mean that a woman could save him?'

'Yes,' he said, almost with a groan; 'but it would be at her own cost.'

'Not if she loved him?'

'Yes; all the more if she loved him.'

Lucy turned away, and the wind got under her umbrella and turned it inside out, and made a diversion.

'There is no other way?' she said, when Eric had brought it back into something like shape, and returned it to her.

'No,' he said, 'there is no other way.'

Lucy put down her umbrella—she would battle no more with the storm—and the rain came down in a sheet and wetted her through and through as she walked slowly back to the college.

There was a crowd of girls round the table in the hall when she came in. The postman had just been, and the letters were lying on the hall table, and the girls were crowding round. Among the girls standing by the table was Pamela Gwatkin. She looked up when Lucy came in wet and draggled,

and a dull red flush crept up under her skin, and her lips tightened.

'Wherever has she been such a morning as this?' said one of the girls aloud as Lucy passed them.

She didn't pause at the table and look for her letters like the rest. She didn't expect letters by every post like other girls; the coming of the postman never stirred her pulse the least. She had no one to write to her.

Pamela didn't vouchsafe Lucy another look, but went back to her room with her head lifted high, and her letters — she had quite a sheaf of them, letters and papers—clutched to her bosom. She didn't attempt to open them when she got back to her room. She went straight to the window and looked out at the blinding rain.

'She has been to meet him again,' she murmured; 'and such a morning as this! She must be very far gone. Oh, it is outrageous! It is quite indecent!'

Another girl who had seen her come in followed

Lucy back to her room, and just as she had reached it Lucy shut the door in her face.

Nothing daunted, Capability Stubbs tried the handle of the door, but Lucy had locked it on the inside; no doubt she was taking her wet things off. One doesn't take the occasion to hold a levee when one is wet to the skin.

Lucy did not appear at breakfast. Nobody missed her but Maria Stubbs; everybody else was too much occupied with her own affairs.

The very air of the place was full of examinations, and the loss, the total disappearance, of half a dozen girls, more or less—freshers—wouldn't have been noticed at this exciting moment.

Before she went to her morning's work Miss Stubbs tried Lucy's door again. It was open this time; the housemaid had just come out, and there was that silly little Lucy sitting at her table with her wet things still on. There was a strained look on her white face, as if she had been working at a problem all night, and it hadn't come out right yet.

'Oh, good gracious!' Miss Stubbs exclaimed, when she came over to the girl and put her hand on her wet shoulder. 'Whatever *are* you sitting here for?'

Lucy looked up with a faint look of wonder in her eyes, and then, finding she had forgotten to take off her wet things, she began slowly to peel them off one by one.

Maria Stubbs had no patience with her. She pulled and dragged at her clinging wet garments, and tore off her shoes, and wrapped her up in a warm dressing-gown of her own that she ran across the passage to fetch. When she had got her out of her wet rags, she fetched her a cup of hot tea from the hall, where the tea-urn was still steaming, and then she began to bully her.

'A fine cold you will catch,' she grumbled, 'and give no end of trouble. I dare say you'll expect us to stay up of nights to nurse you. I give you notice, it's no use to expect me to nurse you; I've got my own work to do.'

Lucy feebly protested that she didn't expect Miss Stubbs to make a martyr of herself, and that she had no intention of being ill, but Maria was not so easily appeased.

'It isn't as if it were an examination,' she said in an aggrieved tone; 'then we could understand it. There'd be an excuse for a girl making an idiot of herself if she had been ploughed in an exam. I've known a girl refuse to eat anything for a week, because she failed twice in her additionals; and another girl—but this was a more serious case; her mind gave way quite on the last day of the exam., and she had to be sent to an asylum. I shouldn't be at all surprised if they were to send you to——'

'Not to the asylum!' said Lucy, in a sudden fright.

She was so bewildered she felt very much like going there already.

'I didn't mean that, silly!' Miss Stubbs said scornfully. 'I was going to say the infirmary. If

you will go and get influenza, you can't expect to stay among people who are going in for examinations. Suppose I were to catch it—or Assurance! I'm not sure that Assurance hasn't caught something already. She begins her Tripos on Monday, and she's about as amiable as a bear.'

Maria Stubbs went back to her work—she was going to be shut up four hours in a laboratory among delightful smells—but before she went she made Lucy promise that she would ask the housekeeper to give her some breakfast.

Later in the day Lucy went over to the lodge to see the Master. The wind had gone down, but a gray mist hung over everything, and the trees were no longer rustling their leaves overhead. The branches were drooping with their own weight, and the leaves were limp, and dropping slow tears upon her as she passed beneath.

The Master was better to-day, decidedly better. He had slept several hours during the night, and he looked quite himself, Lucy thought, when she

went into the room and saw him propped up in his chair. He was up and dressed; he had insisted on being dressed; they could not keep him in bed; and his chair was wheeled over to the window, where he sat looking out on to the river, and the path beneath the trees where an old, old philosopher used to walk long ago.

He had always loved that path by the river-side. It had been his favourite walk once. Perhaps the old associations had something to do with it; they have with most of the things men value in Cambridge. A great past seems to meet one at every college gate. Every inch of ground has its own sacred memories, and the path beneath the trees had echoed to the tread of generations of poets, sages, and scholars since the old philosopher walked there.

But it was not of the philosopher that the Master dreamed, as he sat looking out on the gray path and the blurred river. It was no longer the Cam he saw; it was the babbling trout-stream that ran

by his father's farm—the gray shallow river that skirted the meadows, and swept beneath the arches of the old bridge, and roared in a torrent over the weirs.

'You are better to-day, uncle,' Lucy said, as she stood beside his chair and looked down at the worn old face, and the white hair on the pillow.

'Better? I am quite well, my dear. I have just come in from fishing, and I am tired. I have caught quite a large basket, and I have walked a long way beside the river. Dick wouldn't wait for me. He went home early. Perhaps it was as well.'

Lucy looked anxiously at the nurse.

'He is better in himself,' Nurse Brannan said softly. 'He has had a good night, and has awoke much refreshed, but his memory is gone. I don't think it will ever be better.'

Nurse Brannan had made a great change in the sick-room; it didn't look like a sick-room. It was as light and bright as it well could be on such a

dull day, and there was a small fire burning in the grate, and a big bowl of lilac on the table—the Master was very fond of lilac.

Lucy ran her fingers through the sweet pale-purple buds as she stood beside the table. She was not fond of picking things to pieces like the Science girls, who can never see a flower without tearing its heart out. She was content to bury her face in a posy and drink in its sweetness and beauty. She buried her face in the bunch of lilac as she stood beside the Master's chair, and the old man watched her with his dim eyes.

They suddenly brightened as he watched her; they were dim no longer; they were bright and shining. Something in her attitude, or in the smell of the flowers, had brought back to him the old time: the old lane that skirted the farm with the blossoming hawthorn-trees on either side, and the orchard with the smell of the apple-blossom, and the lilac hanging over the garden-wall.

'Ah,' he said, 'you picked this from the old

tree by the gate. I noticed it was coming into bloom this morning when I passed, and the pink thorn is in bud, and the orchard is a sight to see.

The fragrance of the old days was about him, and its colours were unfaded. Lucy left him babbling to the nurse about the flowers that used to grow in the old garden of his childhood. His heart, like that of a little child, had gone back at the close of the journey to the place from which he had first set out.

Cousin Mary was with Mrs. Rae; she had been up with her all night. There was as much need for nursing here as in the Master's room. Lucy was quite shocked at the change that a few hours had wrought in the Master's wife. She looked years older to-day, and her face had changed. All the cheerful brightness that had given an air of youthfulness to it into extreme old age was gone now. It was placid and resigned, but it was youthful and bright no longer.

There was nothing the matter with her, Cousin Mary said, but the shock had been too much for her. A few days' rest and quiet, the doctor thought, might bring her round.

'You have seen the Master?' she asked Lucy eagerly when she came into the room.

Lucy noticed that the voice, like the face, had changed, and grown feeble and old.

'Yes; I have seen the Master. He is so much better to-day. He is sitting up by the window. He is quite himself.'

She didn't say anything about that fishing excursion of his, nor how tired he felt now the day's work was done.

'He is really better?'

She asked this with a strange eagerness, and laid her thin hand on Lucy's.

'Yes, dear, really better. He will soon be quite well. It is you who are the invalid now. You must make haste and get well, too.'

'Thank God!' said the feeble voice, and the thin

hand relaxed its hold, and she fell back on the pillow. 'Someone told me he was wandering,' she said—'that he did not know anyone. But perhaps I am mistaken. It may be in me. I may have dreamed it.'

'Yes, dear,' Lucy said reassuringly, 'it is in you. You have certainly dreamed it.'

She left the old woman quite happy, but tears were dropping from her own eyes as she went slowly down the stairs of the lodge. She was not quite sure in this tender casuistry if she was not giving the Master's wife the sentence of death.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

What on earth possessed Lucy to go out into the lane again the next morning at that ridiculously early hour, before seven o'clock, she could never tell. She was not anxious about the Master. She had left him in good hands, sitting beside the window babbling about the lilac-bushes in the old garden.

Perhaps it was because it was such a lovely May morning that Lucy went out into the lane; it was a shame to stay indoors a minute longer.

A change had come over the scene since yesterday. The clouds had all passed away like magic, and

the sun was shining, and the sky was blue above, and the earth was green beneath, and, oh, how the birds were singing! There was no excuse for Lucy being in bed. Most of the girls had been up working hours ago, and some had not been in bed since daybreak.

She didn't expect to meet anyone in the lane; she only went out, and looked round, quite by the way, and—and she saw Wyatt Edgell coming to her, up between the green hedgerows, where the hawthorn was in bloom, and beneath the blue sky, where a lark—where a dozen larks were singing, and she had never seen so delightful a picture before in her life.

Like the storm of yesterday, all traces of that midnight debauch had passed away. His face ought to have been pale and soddened, and his eyes dull and heavy, with great bags beneath them, but they were not the least changed. The fine intellectual beauty of the face was finer than ever, and the mere physical beauty, which no girl could

look upon untouched, was seen to its best advantage on this sweet May morning.

Wyatt Edgell wore a straw hat with the ribbon of his college around it. He had just come from the river, fresh from his bath, and the sun had dried his hair as he had come along, and it curled all over his head in short crisp curls like a god. His face was glowing and his eyes were shining; he looked a picture of perfect health and manly beauty.

We have had so many studies of Venus rising fresh from her bath, but the artists have not been so keen on Adonis.

A sweet thing in oils, not 'The Bather,' but 'The Bathed,' would be a novelty on the walls of the Academy.

There are no baths at Newnham, only six feet of zinc to splash about in, and that one has to take in turn at the end of a lane of girls waiting in the passage. Lucy wouldn't have had her turn for another hour this morning, so she had dressed

without it, and had come out into the lane to take a bath of sunshine instead.

She looked paler than if she had had her turn of splashing in eighteen inches of water, but her hair wasn't limp and wet and untidy.

Her heart couldn't help beating a little faster as Wyatt Edgell came towards her, and her face burnt hotly. She could feel that she was blushing like a milkmaid.

'Oh, you here!' she said in quite a tone of surprise. 'I didn't expect you this morning.'

He didn't believe her. He couldn't look down into her glowing face and believe she had put on all those blushes to meet the burning gaze of Apollo, unless, indeed, she expected Wattles.

'No?' he said with a smile, and he imprisoned her hand; 'but I couldn't keep away. I had something to tell you this morning.'

'About the Master?' she said, turning pale.

'No; it has nothing to do with the Master. I asked for him at the lodge as I came out, and they

told me he had had a good night. Phyllis Brannan is with him, and she is a host in herself.'

Lucy tossed her head.

'Oh, you know Nurse Brannan?' she said coldly.

'Yes,' he said gravely; 'I have reason to know Phyllis, best and kindest of nurses. If ever there was a woman true as steel, it is Phyllis Brannan.'

Lucy sniffed impatiently. She hadn't come out without her bath at seven o'clock in the morning to hear the praises of Nurse Brannan. She was quite sure she would be quite as good a nurse after a reasonable probation, and she wouldn't keep her hair so untidy.

'What had you got to tell me?' she said shortly.

It was not exactly encouraging; but Edgell smiled and drew her away from the gate and up the lane, and then she discovered that he still held her hand.

She drew it away sharply and stopped. She really didn't care to walk any farther with him if

he were only going to talk about Nurse Brannan. She had been fighting a dreadfully hard battle with herself all night, all the previous day—ever since that conversation with Eric—and she had worked herself up, like the martyrs of old, for a big sacrifice, for the stake, if need be; and now, after all that struggle, there wasn't going to be any stake at all.

Nurse Brannan was going to the stake, perhaps. She was ready at any time to do all sorts of disagreeable things without making any fuss about them.

'Would you mind walking this way?' he said, and he led Lucy unresisting up the lane into that narrow part, past the posts, between the high hedges, that shut them out from all curious eyes.

'I have come to ask you a question,' he said, speaking low, with a little catch in his voice, 'and I want an answer before I go back to work. The Tripos begins on Monday. Will it be worth while to go in for it?'

'What do you mean?' she said; but she knew very well what he meant.

'I think you know what I mean, Miss Rae—Lucy. I think you know more about me than any other woman. If you will tell me I have anything to work for, I will go back and work, and—and some day I will come to you again; but if—if there is nothing to work for, I shall go down to-day.'

'You would not throw up your chance?' she said. She was quite pale, and she was trembling all over.

'I should certainly throw it up. What would be the use of a degree to me with *that* before me? There is only one thing, Lucy, to stand between me and it. My sentence must come from your lips. Am I to go back and work?'

No one looking at him standing there in the sunshine, with that smile on his face, would have dreamed the issue that hung on the girl's lips. She couldn't realize it herself; she could only gasp

and tremble. He had quite taken her breath away. She would have given the world to run away without giving that fateful answer, but the lane was narrow, and he stood before her.

'Well,' he said, watching with his eager, questioning eyes the changes on her face, 'am I to go back to work?'

What could she say? Her lips faltered, and the words would not come; again she tried, but his sentence lingered.

There was a merle singing in the elm-tree above, and a thrush was calling for its mate, and the wood-pigeons were cooing softly in the orchard over the hedge; everything was so glad and happy and full of life and love on this May morning; every voice in nature was pleading for him.

Her face was dreadfully pale, and her lips were quivering, and her heart was beating like a hammer. She looked up into his face with a strange white terror in her eyes, and she saw the scarf round his throat. It was the coloured striped scarf of his

college, and he wore it twisted on that balmy morning round his throat. The sight of that scarf decided her.

'I think you must go back to work,' she said softly, with just a little wan smile.

He caught her in his arms, to his heart, and kissed her on the forehead.

'God bless you, Lucy!' he said—'God bless you, darling!'

The pressure of his arms, the strange, sweet pressure of his warm lips on her forehead, brought the blood back to her heart, to her cheeks, and she drew herself away, flushing scarlet.

A Newnham girl came in at one end of the lane, and a Selwyn man came in at the other, and they went back to their respective colleges and told the tale. It was all over Newnham at breakfast-time that Lucy had been seen kissing a man in broad daylight just outside the walls of the college.

The old, old story has been told a great many

times, in a great many ways, but it had never been told at Newnham before or at Girton in such a barefaced way. It will be told in the public streets next, or perhaps in the Senate House.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE PICTURE-GALLERY.

The term wore on, and there was nothing talked of in Cambridge but examinations. How could one talk about anything else when it was the subject uppermost in everybody's mind? There were the boat-races, and the college balls, and the concerts, but exciting as these were to the sisters and cousins of the men, they were of secondary importance to the exams.

The nearer the day approaches for the dreaded trial the more dreadful seems the finality of the approaching result. Nobody questions the finality of the sentence at the time, and when it happens

to be adverse men go away and hide their heads and think that all things are at an end for them. By-and-by the gates of Hope are opened afresh and things don't look quite so bad, and in nine cases out of ten nobody knows out of Cambridge whether a man has taken a high degree or not.

Perhaps it is different with women, the cases being more exceptional; a girl who has done well usually goes through life with an affix to her name, spoken with awe by her admiring friends—'Fifth Wrangler,' 'First Class Moral Science,' 'Senior Op,' and so on.

There would be a good many girls do well at Newnham this term. There would be several first-classes, and some good seconds, and a few, very few thirds. Women never take Poll degrees, so that all, every one, would go out in Honours.

There was a great fuss made with the girls who were going up for the exams. They were fed and petted and looked after just as if they were in training. There were special dishes for them at

the High, and they were taken out for exercise, or driven out for airings, and put to bed at given hours. It was not the fault of the authorities if they did not reflect honour on their college.

The men were not the objects of such tender solicitude to their Tutors and Deans. They were left pretty much to themselves, and went to bed when they liked, and got up when they liked, and took their food or left it. Those who liked took exercise, and those who didn't sported their oak and worked until they were deaf and blind, and their brains were so addled that they could hardly find their way into the examination-room.

Wyatt Edgell sported his oak from morning till night during those few days preceding the Tripos examination, but he didn't addle his brains. They were not brains easy to addle by work. The men remarked that this close application, which would have made most men seedy and stale, seemed to agree with him. His eyes were brighter, and his step was lighter, and more assured than

heretofore, and he held his head like a man who was going to win, and he hummed snatches of songs—love-songs mostly—as he crossed the courts or climbed his staircase, taking two and three steps at a time, as a man of his youth and strength should do.

A change had come over him since that morning when Lucy had told him to go back to work. He had not seen her in the lane since, though he had gone up to Newnham every morning, and stood staring at the gate until the bell rang for prayers, and then he had gone up the narrow little path between the hedges, and visited again the spot where he had taken her in his arms.

If she had been there when he made these matutinal pilgrimages to the spot, he would surely have taken her in his arms again, and great would have been the scandal at Newnham.

Lucy didn't go out in the lane again alone after that morning. She was quite frightened at what she had done. She couldn't very well have done

otherwise. What woman would? She had saved him—at least, she told herself she had saved him. He would go back to his work now, and he would take his degree, probably a very good degree. She didn't dare to speculate any farther; she stopped at his degree. She never said a word about what she had done to Cousin Mary; she wouldn't have told her for the world. Mary had only pointed Wyatt Edgell out to her on the steps of the chapel a month ago. She didn't know him from Eric Gwatkin a month ago, and now she was engaged to marry him!

No wonder Lucy was frightened, and wouldn't have run the risk of meeting him alone for the world. She developed suddenly a violent affection for Miss Stubbs, and used to implore her with tears in her eyes to accompany her in her visits to the lodge. She was such a dreadful little coward, she didn't dare to go alone.

The Master was no worse; his memory had gone, and his physical powers were weakened, since

his accident in the garden, but there was no immediate danger. He might go on babbling in his second childhood for weeks or months.

Lucy met the Senior Tutor at the lodge sometimes when she paid her afternoon visits, but she never went to his rooms again. She wouldn't have risked meeting Wyatt Edgell on the stairs for all the coaching in the world. She would rather have been ploughed.

The Tutor couldn't say any more to Lucy about Cousin Mary and the Master's wife making the lodge their home when he met her at these times, as Maria Stubbs was always with her. It seemed likely that the Master's wife would have a home elsewhere before long, and the arrangement would fall through.

Maria had fallen in love with the long gallery of the lodge, as everybody does who goes to St. Benedict's, and she used to wait for Lucy there while she paid her visits to the invalids. Miss Stubbs never did things by halves, and she made

herself acquainted during these visits with all the old portraits on the walls. She knew every one of them, from the pale foundress in her sober pre-Raphaelitish dress, to the old Master in his scarlet gown. She had established quite a nodding acquaintance with all of them, and she had got up most of the facts of their history. She knew more about them than Lucy, though she had lived among them for months.

One day while she was poring over the old portraits in the gallery a man came in. He had come up the stairs two at a time, and he had looked eagerly round when he got into the gallery.

There was nobody there but a red-haired girl in spectacles, and the old dead and gone Masters. Yes, there was the foundress, but he didn't care a button for the foundress. He was looking for a real flesh-and-blood woman; his pulses were leaping, and his heart was thumping against his side, and his eyes were shining—he had just

finished the first part of the exam.—and just at this moment the fairest creation of the finest master on canvas wouldn't have satisfied him.

He walked to the end of the gallery looking for Lucy—she might be hiding away in any of the little oriel windows—and Miss Stubbs watched him.

She was so glad to see his countenance fall when he couldn't find her. A woman would not have shown her disappointment in that transparent way. She would have made the best of it, and talked to the man who was there, but Edgell glared at Maria savagely, and didn't seem inclined to talk.

'Lucy Rae is with the Master,' she said sweetly; she knew instinctively that he was looking for Lucy. 'She will be here presently.'

Edgell tried to look as if it didn't matter, and he wasn't particular whether she came now or at midnight, but he didn't take Miss Stubbs in.

He fidgeted up and down the gallery, stopping every now and then before a picture, but never

looking at it, or staring out into the court below from the old latticed oriel window. He was standing in the recess of the window idly tattooing on the pane when Lucy came in.

She didn't see him until she reached the window, and she came running down the gallery in that energetic way peculiar to the students of colleges for women.

'I'm afraid I've kept you a long time, M'ria; I hope you don't mind——' and then she paused, and Edgell came towards her with his hands outstretched.

He would have taken her in his arms, but there was that hateful Maria at the end of the gallery. He came to Lucy as a lover should come to his mistress, with the love-light in his eyes, and his whole being quivering with passion.

'My darling!' he said, and he took her hands.

Lucy had no idea of being kissed like a milkmaid with Miss Stubbs looking on, and she drew her hands quickly away.

'You here?' she said.

'Yes,' he answered, looking down upon her with that warm light in his eyes and his lips smiling; 'where else should I look for you? I have waited in the lane every morning in the week, and you have never come since — since that morning——'

'The Master is better,' she said, dropping her eyes; they were such sweet, shy eyes they could not meet the hot flame in his.

'And was it only to hear about the Master you came?' he said in a low voice that thrilled her and brought the colour into her cheeks.

'It was to tell me about him you came.' Her voice trembled in spite of herself, and her heart was beating tumultuously.

'It was because I loved you I came, Lucy—darling! I could not live without a sight of your dear face. I have lived a whole week without you, and it has seemed a year. You must not leave me alone again so long, darling!'

There was more in the tone than in his words, and Lucy looked up anxiously into his face.

He read the question in her eyes and he smiled gravely, almost sadly.

'No,' he said, 'thank God, not that!' and he stooped and kissed her forehead reverently between the bright brown ripples of her hair.

Her face grew warm under his touch, and she trembled and drew back. Suppose that girl in the gallery had seen him? It would be all over Newnham. And the servants might come in at any time, or Cousin Mary; and Mr. Colville might walk into the gallery unannounced, as he was accustomed to do. Oh, it would be dreadful to be caught kissing like a housemaid!

'And you have been working hard all this time?' she said, when she had got the little oak table that stood in the window well between them.

'Yes, I have been working pretty well. I shouldn't have done a stroke if you hadn't given

me something to work for. I should have thrown it all up, and gone down.'

'Oh, it would never have done for you to have gone down — you who are expected to bring so much credit to the college! It would have disappointed everybody, and your own people most. What would your people have said?'

'They would have been disappointed—and—and I think my mother would have been sorry. She is such a tender, indulgent mother; she has never refused me anything. She has always stood between me and my father, and covered up all my shortcomings, but she couldn't have covered up this, and—and there would have been a row. Yes, I think it would have disappointed her.'

His eyes were tender and softened as he spoke of his mother, and Lucy thought as she stood there of that dreadful scene when she found Eric on his knees beside the couch, and she wondered how his mother would have covered up that.

She looked up at the warm, tender face of the

man bending over her—he had got round the table—and with a sudden terror she saw the mark on his throat—he had not covered it; he wore no scarf to-day, and his collar was open, and the purple mark was visible on the white skin.

He saw her eyes travel to—not to his face; they stopped short at his throat, and a white look of terror came into them.

'Yes,' he said, reading her thoughts—her transparent thoughts—'she would have covered up this, but it would have broken her heart.'

He drew his collar up round his throat as he spoke and Lucy's eyes filled with tears.

'It is all over and past,' she said bravely; 'there will be no need to "break her heart" now. You will fulfil all her expectations; you will make her happy and proud—oh, so proud! If men who are tempted to do silly, selfish things would only pause and think of the people who love them!'

Edgell drew her nearer to him.

Maria Stubbs was not looking that way; she really was a most sensible girl, she was entirely absorbed in the pictures.

'I will think of you, then,' he said in a low voice that vibrated with passion, 'when—when I am tempted; but I must be sure of your love, Lucy, or it will be no good; there must be no mistake about it. It must be the real thing; a make-believe, a sham, would never save a man! Tell me if—if at such a time, darling, I may think of you?'

He put the question solemnly, though his lips were smiling, but his eyes were looking down into hers as if they would read her soul.

Lucy's face grew pale and troubled; she knew exactly what his question meant; she felt limp and frightened, dreadfully frightened. Anyone might come into the gallery at any moment, and he was holding her in a grasp of iron and reading her little transparent soul through and through. She could not escape from him.

She had no alternative.

'Yes,' she murmured almost inaudibly; 'you may think of me if—if it will help you.'

He took her in his arms for one brief moment—he forgot all about Maria Stubbs—and kissed her lips and her eyes.

'My darling!' he murmured—'my darling!'

Lovers have such a limited vocabulary, they are obliged to have recourse to unmeaning repetitions.

Miss Stubbs had behaved beautifully till now—no Newnham girl could have behaved better; but there is a limit to all human endurance, and the limit of Maria's endurance had been reached.

'I hope you are nearly ready,' she said in a most unpleasant voice; 'because if not I must go.'

'I am quite ready, dear,' said Lucy, nearly crying. 'I have been ready a long time.'

She could have blessed Miss Stubbs for taking her away. She was dreadfully frightened, but it was with a strange, delicious terror that stirred her pulses like a tumult of joy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAPABILITY STUBBS.

It was clearly Lucy's duty not to go back to Newnham, whatever Maria Stubbs' hurry might be, until she had told her Cousin Mary what had passed between her and Wyatt Edgell in the gallery.

It is not usual, even at Cambridge, where there have been so many social revolutions of late, for young women to receive the visits of gentlemen, and exchange the privileged amenities of engaged persons, without acquainting the elders of their household.

There was no one to acquaint at the lodge but Cousin Mary. It was no use telling the Master, he would confuse it with Dick's courtship that had

been over sixty years ago, and he would be telling Nurse Brannan that Lucy's mother first met her lover in a dancing-booth at a fair. The Master's wife was almost past telling; she had been growing weaker day by day ever since that accident; the world had been slipping away from her ever since. She had ceased to take any interest in anything that was going on around her. She seldom spoke now; sight and strength and speech were all failing. When she did speak, she had only one question to ask: 'How is the Master?'

But Lucy would not admit that she had any engagement yet to tell anybody about. She had only told Wyatt Edgell that he might go back to work, and she had further told him that he might think of her at certain times.

This was all; no promise, no real engagement. Of course he ought not to have taken her into his arms until he was properly engaged. He had been premature, but Lucy had no one but herself to blame for it.

This is how Lucy reasoned as she walked back to Newnham with Miss Stubbs. She went straight back without seeing the Master's wife or Cousin Mary; she positively crept out of the lodge as if she had done some shameful thing, and was afraid of being found out. She was very nice to Maria on the way. She called her dear, which is quite an unheard-of thing among the Stoics of Newnham, but Miss Stubbs was not to be taken in.

'It's pretty far gone,' she observed with a sniff, when Lucy made a timid little allusion to Edgell's visit to the gallery.

'Oh dear no, not at all!' Lucy said sweetly.

Miss Stubbs raised her red eyebrows. It was those dreadful red eyebrows and red eyelashes that made her so—so unlovely.

'Oh,' she remarked in her unpleasant way, 'I thought I heard—ahem!—some—some kissing. I may have been mistaken; perhaps it was the wind.'

'The wind was very rough this afternoon,

dear; it was rattling the shaky old lattice dreadfully.'

Miss Stubbs smiled scornfully. There hadn't been a breath of air all the day.

'I suppose it's a settled thing?' she said presently.

'Settled? Oh no; not at all!'

'Then it ought to be!' Maria said sharply. 'You've given him encouragement enough. He's been hanging about the lane every morning this week. It's known all over the place that he's waiting for you.'

'But I haven't met him!' Lucy said stoutly. She wasn't going to be sat upon by Maria.

'No; oh no! you haven't met him this week; we should all have known it if you had, because we've all been on the look-out since that day when you were caught kissing in the lane. I shouldn't have mentioned it—though it's not good form in a woman's college—if it hadn't occurred again today. It's all right, I suppose, if you are engaged.'

'But I am not engaged!' said Lucy impatiently.

She was not going to be lectured by Maria. Nobody would ever think of kissing Maria in the lane.

'Then I don't understand it,' Miss Stubbs said stiffly.

'Oh, you poor creature!' Lucy said with a weak attempt at a laugh, and her cheeks scarlet. 'I am only encouraging him for his own good. I have only told him he may work; he is sure to take a high place, but he would not do anything if I did not encourage him. Think: all his life depends upon it. You would do the same if you were in my place.'

Miss Stubbs did not say she wouldn't, but she blushed beneath her freckles, and her eyes softened beneath the red lashes. There were depths in her eyes that Lucy had never seen in them before, and she was looking at Maria sharply—unfathomed depths, for nobody had tested the depths and height

of Maria's love. Perhaps a brave man, who does not look on the outward appearance, or who prefers red hair, may some day, and he will have no cause for regret.

'And what will happen when—when the work is done, and he has won the high place?' Maria asked softly.

She was thinking how she would love above all things to fire a man who loved her with ambitions. She would fill him with the noblest ambitions, and when he had climbed the ladder, when he had realized all his dreams, she would not cheat him of his reward.

'And what then?' she repeated, when she found Lucy did not answer.

'Oh, I don't know. I have not made up my mind. Whatever happened, it would be a great thing for him to have done the work—to have taken his degree, that could never be recalled. I am sure I have done right—in—in encouraging him, as you term it.'

'I think it would be base—and mean—and unworthy—an unwomanly thing to throw him over in the end!' Maria said, with a little catch in her voice. She couldn't find adjectives strong enough, and she had to pause between each.

Wyatt Edgell went back to his rooms across the court with great swinging strides, and he climbed the stairs three at a time. He met the Senior Tutor coming out of his rooms at the top of the stairs, and the little snatch of a love-song he was singing died on his lips. Still, his lips were smiling, and his eyes were shining, and his face was earnest and set. It was the face of a man who was going to do something—who was going to win.

'How have you done?' the Tutor asked, stopping him. He asked it with a smile; he hadn't any doubt about how he had done.

'Not so well as I could have wished, sir. I shall do better in the next part.'

There are two 'parts' in the Mathematical Tripos. If a man gets through Part I. he is

allowed to proceed farther; he is allowed to go in for Honours. There could be no doubt about Wyatt Edgell being 'through' in the 'first part.' He was quite safe in going back to work for Honours. There is a week between the end of one examination and the beginning of another. There is time to pick one's self up and prepare afresh for the fight—the real fight this time.

Wyatt Edgell went back to his room and 'sported' his oak. It was open just for a minute after Hall, and Eric Gwatkin came in.

Eric had been working at his Special—he took theology, about as stiff a Special as a man can take—all the week, and he had just come to the end of his exam. There would be Hebrew on the Monday, about which he knew very little; if he should make a stray shot it would count, but the real work of the exam. was over. He was looking limp, and used up, and dejected. His eyes were dull, and his cheeks were flabby, and his hair, which he wore long, hung down in a spiritless

way. He was the greatest possible contrast to Edgell.

'Well, Wattles,' he said, looking up when Eric came into the room—'well, have you floored the examiners?'

Eric didn't exactly turn green, but his flabby cheeks turned a shade paler.

'It's all over, dear fellow,' he said with a gulp—he hadn't got anything to swallow. He had just come in from Hall, but he gulped down something. 'The examiners have floored me. I'm ploughed, to a certainty.'

He sat down as he spoke on the couch where Edgell had lain on that day, and tried to look cheerful.

'Nonsense, old man! it isn't so bad as that. You are through, for certain.'

'No; I don't think I am through.'

'Well, suppose the worst, if it gives you much pleasure to anticipate it; you can come up again in October.'

'No; I shall not come up again. I shall go down and try something else. Remember, I have already tried two professions. I shall take it, if I fail, that—that the Church is closed to me. I have an offer of something in the City, and I should have to go abroad for a time, and then settle down to work. Perhaps it's the right thing for me, after all.'

'Nonsense, Wattles! What would you do stuck on a high stool in the City? You'd be getting off it half a dozen times a day to go on your knees. It's no use your choosing a profession that isn't very near the ground, where you could be on your knees all day long. That's the only profession you've got any chance in, Wattles.'

Eric smiled, and if Edgell hadn't been looking straight before him in that way he had of not seeing anything within a hundred miles he might have seen that his eyes were red, and that there was something very suspiciously like a tear in the corner of one of them.

'You are working in earnest,' he said presently, nodding towards the table where Edgell was seated, which was covered with books and papers.

'Ye—es,' said the other with a smile, still looking out of the window at the patch of sunset sky over the gray battlements of the college—'ye—es; I've got something to work for. I didn't do half well in the first part; I wasn't sure—quite sure—but it's all right now, and I shall go in and do my best. You have never seen me do my best, Wattles; you will see me do it now—for—for Lucy's sake.'

His face was very noble and tender. It was an ideal man's face — strong, and self-reliant, and masterful, and inexpressibly tender. It moved Eric watching him from that couch, and knowing so much about him.

'It is settled, then?' he said presently, again swallowing something unsatisfactory that seemed to stick.

'Yes; it is settled. She has given me an

antidote, a charm, against that accursed thing. She has told me to think of her.'

He was thinking of her now as he lay back in his chair watching the sunlight steal along the roof, and up, up, up the spire of the college chapel. He was thinking of Lucy's sweet eyes, and her blushing cheeks, and the golden ripples of her hair, and he was telling himself that the thought of her would be a tower of strength to him in the future, that he would never, never fall again. When the old temptation came, let it take what form it would, he should be able to meet it. He would only have to think of Lucy.

Eric watched him as he sat on the couch opposite. He guessed what was passing in his mind. His own mind travelled over the ground with him, and presently he paused and sighed. He had come to a *cul-de-sac*.

'Well,' Edgell said, looking round like one aroused from a day-dream, 'what are you croaking at, Wattles?'

Eric made a feeble attempt to smile; it was a very poor attempt, and it only made his poor tired face look more ghastly.

'I only hope, dear fellow, it will answer,' he said huskily.

'Of course it will answer. It is the only thing in the world for me, and for such as me. There is nothing but the love of a woman that can hold a fellow back when—when he has gone so far as I have; there is nothing but a woman's love that could reach down, down—God only knows how deep—and pick a fellow up who has fallen into the pit, that can drag a man out, wounded and maimed, from under the very wheels of Juggernaut at the risk of her own life and reason. There is only one kind of love that can do this.'

Eric looked at him with a strange pity in his eyes.

'You think it is right to put her to such a test?' he said.

'I do not think anything about it. If she loves

me, she will not think any trial too hard. Tush, man! you know nothing about love if you do not know that love delights in sacrifice. It must have its altar—the rites could not be celebrated without an altar—and it must have its offering—its free-will offering — its victim. It withholds not its dearest—how should it? Love has no self.'

Eric groaned. He knew nothing about a woman's love. He didn't believe that little Lucy could ever love a man like that.

'My dear fellow,' he said, 'you judge a woman's nature by your own. All women would not rise to such heights.'

'The woman that I loved would,' said the other confidently. 'You will have a chance of putting it to the test before long. If—if I am kept, it will be Lucy's love that will keep me; but if—if it happens again, it will be as you say—I shall have judged a woman's nature by my own.'

The smile had faded from his face, and his eyes were cold and hard, and his lips were pressed tight

together. It was not the same face that had smiled upon Eric when he came into the room.

Eric was ashamed of himself, and hung his head. He ought not to have questioned Lucy's love. Nobody had ever loved him, nobody but Pamela, and she was always bullying him. He ought to have been silent until he had found out for himself what a woman will do for the man she loves.

'It must never happen again, dear old man,' he said, laying his hand affectionately on Edgell's shoulder. 'Remember, you have vowed——'

'I know all that,' Edgell interrupted impatiently. 'Do you think all the vows in the world would hold me back, when—when that accursed thing came upon me? You have never been tried yourself——'

'No, no, no, thank God!'

'You may well thank God. I tell you, if the breaking the oath I have sworn—the oaths I have sworn—I have sworn dozens—hundreds—would

lose heaven itself, I should still break it—I should not be able to resist when the temptation came upon me.'

'You are right to mistrust yourself,' Eric said sadly. 'Oh, my dear fellow, if you would only trust Him who is the unfailing Strength of all them that put their trust in Him, and who would be a Strong Tower to you in the face of the enemy!'

'Dear old Wattles!' Edgell said good-humouredly. 'I knew you only wanted an excuse for going on your knees. I'm awfully busy now, old man. I'm going to work till daylight—and—and if the Enemy, as you are pleased to call him, should come—I'll think of Lucy!'

He looked past Gwatkin to the blue sky over the roof of the chapel. The sun had all but set, and the vane at the top of the spire had caught the last remnant of fleeting sunshine and rent it in twain.

CHAPTER XIX.

A STRONG TOWER.

'Weakness to be wroth with weakness.'

It was a dreadful time of heartburnings at Newnham through all the next week; not at Newnham only, but all over Cambridge. So many Triposes were on, and the week's interval between the first and second parts of the examination for the Mathematical Tripos was being made the most of by the coming Wranglers and Senior Ops.

There were half a dozen girls at Newnham going in for Honours in mathematics, but there was only one that was expected to take a high place—a very high place—among the Wranglers of the year.

There would be several Senior and Junior Optimes, but there would be only one Wrangler this year.

The hopes of Newnham were set on Pamela Gwatkin, who was expected to do such great things, to win such honour for the women's college. A dark rumour had reached St. John's and Trinity—who like to divide the honours between them—that they were likely to be left behind in the race—far behind. They were uneasy and anxious, though they wouldn't have owned it for the world, for—

> 'At times the high gods, who o'er papers preside,
> Send a lady from Newnham to chasten their pride.'

The rumour caused a great deal of midnight oil to be burnt in Cambridge during the first week in June. Wyatt Edgell never went to bed till daylight; not that the rumour disturbed him, he only laughed gaily when he heard that 'the lady from Newnham' was Wattles' sister. Perhaps, being twins, he measured them by the same standard.

He never saw Lucy all through that week, though he went every morning at the usual hour

up the lane. He didn't linger at the gate now—he had no time for lingering at gates; but he looked up at her window. He had found out which was Lucy's window, and he paid his accustomed pilgrimage to that sacred spot in the narrowed lane between the hedgerows, that were all white with May now, and then he would hurry back to his work. He would take back with him from Newnham, as a memento of his visit, a bit of sweet-briar from the hedge, and he would lay it on his table before him, that something of the fragrance of his love might be about him while he worked.

He wrote to her during the week a little letter that would have set any other woman's pulses on fire, but it only frightened Lucy. She couldn't understand the vehemence of a man's love. She didn't answer it—she couldn't without compromising herself completely; but she sent him a message by Eric.

It was not often that Eric Gwatkin visited his sister at Newnham. She did not encourage his visits, and she was always too busy to talk to him.

He came up one day in the middle of the week; his examination was over, and he had nothing particular to do, and he came up to see his sister. He had been slumming all the afternoon in that odorous district round Magdalen Bridge, and he had come up to Newnham to see if Pamela would give him some tea.

Pamela was not in her room, and Eric had leisure to look round and see how his sister amused herself. One can tell so much from a room in daily use what people's occupations are.

Pamela did not amuse herself much, unless she found recreation in the higher mathematics.

Her table—it was an eight-legged affair in old oak—groaned beneath the weight of the books on mathematics that were piled upon it. It was as much as the eight legs could do to support it.

Eric quite shivered when he saw those books and the problem papers that were scattered about; the ink was still wet on some of them. He couldn't have worked out one of those problems to have

saved his life. Oh, Nature had made a great mistake! She ought to have made Pamela the man. What was the use of giving all that brain to a woman?

Perhaps Eric thought so; not for the first time, indeed; he may have got used to the thought as he moved uneasily about Pamela's books. There were shelves and shelves of books in this girl's room, and there were not a dozen in Eric's: a Bible and a few theological books, and some Church histories, and nothing more; no poetry, or travels, or philosophy, or fiction—oh no, no fiction!

There were books on Pamela's shelves that made his hair stand on end. He groaned as he read the titles, and he had cold shivers down his back.

To think they should be twins! Oh, Nature had made a great mistake!

He was still reading the titles on the backs of Pamela's naughty black books, and cold shivers were running down his spine, when the door opened and a girl came in.

He looked up, with mild reproof in his eyes, expecting to see Pamela; but it was not his sister, it was Lucy.

Lucy had not come into Pamela Gwatkin's room by choice. She had been sent with a message from one of the Dons, and she had come under protest.

She forgot all about the message when she saw Eric.

'You here?' she said.

There was no reason why he shouldn't be here, in his sister's room. She had just received that letter from Wyatt Edgell, and she was wondering how she should answer it, and the sight of Eric seemed to bring a feeling of relief to her mind.

'Oh, I have been wanting to see you so much!' she said eagerly; she was so afraid Pamela would come in and interrupt them. 'I want to know—how—how Mr. Edgell is going on—if—if anything has happened since——'

Eric understood what she meant, though she

spoke incoherently; and he understood her agitation and reluctance.

'No,' he said slowly, looking at her with a strange pity in his eyes, 'nothing has happened in that way, thank God! He is working hard; I am afraid too hard.'

'Oh, I don't think work will hurt him!' she said scornfully. She remembered how the girls worked here. What the men called 'work' was only play to them. She wasn't at all afraid that her lover would work as hard as Pamela, for instance.

'I don't mean that,' he said; 'I'm not afraid of his breaking down. I'm only afraid that when the strain is over—he—he will feel it—he——'

He was a very awkward young man; he could only stand there stammering and stuttering, while the girl looked at him with dilating eyes.

'You mean,' she said with a shiver, 'that whe the strain is over he will go back to his old way—that he will not be able to withstand——'

She could not finish the sentence; there was a

strange sinking at her heart — a dreadful unutterable loathing and sickness that she could not overcome—and she sank down white and trembling in a chair and covered her face with her hands. The sight of Eric had brought back that awful scene, and she was thinking of that gap in his throat; she could never get it out of her mind.

'No, no, by heaven! not that!' he said almost fiercely. 'He will never, never fall away again in that way, please God; but it is you alone that can keep him. His salvation—heaven forgive me for saying it!—is in your hands.'

'My hands?' Lucy repeated feebly.

'Yes,' he said gravely, almost sternly, 'in your hands. Your love can hold him when nothing else can; it is to him a strong tower against the face of this enemy. You must not fail him in his need.'

'A strong tower!' Lucy moaned. 'Oh, you don't know what you say! I am such a poor little

thing—you don't know how weak I am. Oh, why did he choose me?'

She sat with dilated eyes and white stricken face, moaning and wringing her hands. He was very sorry for the girl, but he couldn't spare her. He was thinking of that look on Edgell's face when he had said what a woman's love could do for him.

'Why do men choose women?' he said almost harshly; 'perhaps it is fate, who can say? He loved you, or he would not have chosen you. Oh, you don't know what it is to win the love of such a man!'

'No—o!' said Lucy meekly, with her little smile—her tiny white smile—'I'm afraid I don't. I'm such a little thing! I could not have a large soul like—like Pamela. Oh, why didn't he choose Pamela?'

'It is too late to ask that question now; he has chosen you. Are you going to be true, and loyal, and put yourself aside, as some women do, or are you going to fail him at the last moment?'

It was a hard question to answer; Lucy could not have answered it if she would. How could she tell—she who had never been tried—to what great occasion she might rise? She might be a heroine yet, though she didn't look like one, sitting there weeping and wringing her hands.

'You will not fail him now; remember his future is in your hands. He will do great things with a woman by his side to encourage him to noble aims, to fire him with noble ambitions. Oh, you do not know what your love will do for him! He will have a great future with you by his side.'

Still Lucy moaned and wrung her hands.

'I shall be always afraid,' she said; 'I shall never feel safe. I shall always be thinking day and night of—of what may happen.'

'It will be your own fault if it happens. It is only your love that will keep him; if that should fail, God help him!'

'I am such a poor little thing!' she moaned.

While she was sitting weeping there, Pamela

came in, and Lucy jumped up and brushed the tears from her eyes, and puckered her little level brows, and tried to look as if she hadn't been crying. She forgot all about the message she had to give Pamela, and when the sister and brother were talking she slipped out of the room.

'What's she crying about?' Pamela asked him as Lucy closed the door behind her. 'Has anything happened to that—that Mr. Edgell? or is the Master worse?'

'The Master is no worse; but Mrs. Rae is ill, very ill,' Eric answered. He was not at all disposed to talk of Wyatt Edgell's love for Lucy to his agnostic sister.

'And Mr. Edgell, has he been having another attack? Has he been attempting suicide again?'

'Hush, Pamela!' Eric Gwatkin exclaimed almost harshly. He could not bear to hear his sister speak of Edgell in that way. 'You don't know what you are saying. That was an accident,

and he had been ill. If you only knew Edgell, you would not say such things. He is the best and noblest fellow in the world, and he is the dearest friend I have.'

'They say he is to head the list this year; that he is to be Senior Wrangler,' Pamela said in her cool, contemptuous way.

'Yes; he is sure to head the list. There is no one to touch him in the 'Varsity.'

Pamela smiled.

Eric had forgotten what rumour was saying about her—that it would be a neck-and-neck race.

'He is working hard, then?' she said indifferently.

What could it matter to her if he were reading hard or raving on his couch with delirium tremens?

'Yes; he's working like a horse—like a giant, rather. He can do six days' work in one every day. No one can have any chance with him.'

Pamela didn't ask Eric to have any tea, and he went away as he came. She didn't even go to the

front door with him. She said good-bye, and sat down to the eight-legged table among her books, and left him to find his way out by himself.

He knew his way pretty well. It was not the first time he had been there. When he was nearly at the end of the first passage a door opened and a girl came out and stopped him. It was Lucy.

'I have been thinking of what you said,' she whispered, with a little break in her voice, 'and I will do what I can. Tell him from me not to work too hard; to—to take care of himself—for my sake.'

Her voice broke down entirely, and she went into the room and shut the door.

He hadn't got to the end of the passage before another door opened, and another girl's head was put out—the head of a girl with red hair. It was Maria Stubbs. She watched him to the end of the passage, and then she sniffed in her unpleasant way and went into Lucy's room.

She went in without knocking, and found Lucy on her knees. She had flung herself on her knees

beside her couch, and was wildly imploring Heaven to make her love strong enough and tender enough to keep this man safe who trusted in her.

She looked up when Maria came in, and stumbled up from her knees, pretending she had been looking for something under the couch, as she had been pretending just now she hadn't been crying; but she didn't take in Miss Stubbs.

'Who was that man you were talking to in the passage?' Maria said bluntly. 'It didn't look like Mr. Edgell.'

'No,' Lucy said meekly; 'it wasn't Mr. Edgell. It was Pamela's brother.'

'And he brought you a message from your lover? Of course he is your lover. I like to call things by their right names. I prefer to call a spade a spade.'

'No, he didn't bring me a message,' Lucy said, with some spirit.

She wasn't always going to be trampled upon by Maria.

'But you sent a message by him. I heard you give him a message. Oh, it's no use trying to deceive me!'

'I couldn't help it—indeed I couldn't help it!' Lucy moaned; and then she sat down upon the couch beside which she had been kneeling, and began to cry.

She was feeling so dreadfully in need of sympathy and advice that she was bound to tell somebody. She couldn't bear all the burden of this terrible secret on her little weak shoulders. The great terror that haunted her would not be so dreadful to face if she could share it with another.

She told Maria Stubbs the whole story from the beginning; she kept nothing back.

Maria listened in silence to the end. Once or twice she was surprised into an exclamation, and her face grew pale beneath the freckles, and if Lucy had been looking at her she would have seen the tears gather in her eyes and Maria furtively brush them aside with the back of her hand. She

would not have let Lucy see that she was crying for the world.

'What would you do if it were you, dear?' Lucy said with a little sob, when she had finished her tale.

'Do?' said Maria, and then she paused, and recalled the face of the man who had been waiting for Lucy in the long gallery of the lodge.

She had seen a good deal of him in those few minutes. She had seen quite enough of him to make up her mind what she should do if he were her lover instead of Lucy's.

'Do, dear?' she repeated, and her eyes beneath their pale lashes grew inexpressibly warm and tender, and her whole face softened and changed. It was plain and freckled no longer; at least, the freckles were there, but one did not notice them in that new wonderful beauty and exaltation that had come into her plain face that was plain no longer. 'I would be a strong tower to him against the face of his enemy!' And she meant it.

CHAPTER XX.

NO FOLLOWERS ALLOWED.

Lucy neglected those dear old people at the lodge shamefully. She was afraid to go to St. Benedict's lest she should meet Wyatt Edgell in the courts, or in the cloisters, or even in the gallery of the lodge itself.

They were well looked after in spite of her neglect. They would have been very badly off indeed if they had been dependent upon her. There was Cousin Mary, who was a tower of strength to everyone who trusted in her. Not a showy, pretentious tower with a flagstaff on the top, but a plain solid structure, against whose granite girth the storm of time and disaster would beat in vain.

Cousin Mary was the presiding genius at the lodge through all this sad time. She ruled the household, received the visitors—and there are always a good many callers at a college lodge in May term—and went from one sick-room to the other all day long, and often all night.

Nurse Brannan was still in attendance on the Master; it had been hard work to get the authorities of Addenbroke's to give her up so long, but the 'Heads' have a special claim upon the hospital staff.

The Master was gradually growing weaker day by day—weaker and more childish. He had forgotten already, in this short time, all that store of learning that had taken him years to collect. He had disencumbered his mind of a useless load of lumber—dry, musty old languages, Hebrew and Sanscrit and Syriac—which would be of no use where he was going. It had taken him a lifetime, a longer lifetime than most men, to accumulate it, and now, in a moment, it had been shot out in a

load like useless rubbish. It had answered its purpose—it had advanced him in the world, it had won him repute and distinction, and it had made some money; and now, when its end was served, when it was only an encumbrance, it had all been shot down.

Perhaps other minds would pick it up, would select from the heap the things that were best worth preserving, and so the lamp of learning would be handed on to another generation.

Lucy came upon the Master once in one of her rare visits to the lodge—it was during the hours set apart for the Tripos Examination, when Wyatt Edgell would be away—and found Nurse Brannan reading to him.

She had opened the door softly and come in unobserved, and the curtains of the big, old-fashioned four-post bedstead concealed her from view. Nurse Brannan was reading the Bible to him. She was reading a parable; the words and the imagery took hold of him more than precept and

promise; he had been expounding them all his life, and they had dropped from him with those other things.

She was reading the parables of the Lost Piece of Silver and the Prodigal Son, and every now and then she would stop and explain. She had a good deal to say about them, and the old Master listened meekly.

It quite took Lucy's breath away to hear that little bit of a nurse explaining the parables to the Master of St. Benedict's. He had preached hundreds of sermons in the college chapel from that very chapter; it had always been a favourite subject with him. It had always had a fitting application to those fresh young minds in the benches beneath him that were perennially engaged in wasting their substance in riotous living. He had read it in every ancient tongue in which it had ever been written. And now a little nurse-girl, who couldn't even keep her hair tidy, was explaining it to him.

'Yes,' he was saying in his slow, quavering

voice; it was weaker now than when Lucy last heard it faltering over those closing words in the Litany in the college chapel—'yes, I mind it quite well. I heard it when I was a boy standing at my mother's knee. She was a poor woman; she would have searched for it all night if she had lost a piece of silver, she would not have rested till she had found it. I was the youngest of all her sons, and when she read that chapter to me as a boy standing there, I used to think that I was the Prodigal, and that by-and-by, when I had wasted all my substance in a far country, I should come back like the Prodigal to my father's house, and ask to be taken in. I've been wanting to go back a long time, my dear; I'm getting tired and old, and I should like to go back. Do you think he would take me in?'

'We will see what the Prodigal's father did when he went back,' said the nurse; and then she read in her soft, slow, earnest voice the concluding words of the old, sweet story.

Nurse Brannan had a wonderful power in reading God's Word, giving by tone and accent a new bearing to the familiar words of Scripture. Lucy had heard the words hundreds of times before, and had hurried over them in her scrambling way of reading her morning portion; but to-day they seemed to convey a special message. She stood there, behind the curtain, while Nurse Brannan read and the old Master listened.

'It seems very clear,' he said, when she had finished. 'It seems just as my mother said. I will arise and go to my Father—I have nowhere else to go—I have changed a good deal in all these years, but — but He would not be likely to change——'

'No,' said Nurse Brannan; 'He has not changed!'

Lucy's tears were dropping fast; she could not trust herself to go in. She crept softly out of the room and shut the door, and went across the landing to Mrs. Rae's room.

The Master's wife was always glad to see Lucy; she gave her better accounts of the Master than anyone else in the household. She looked up when Lucy came in, and noted with her failing eyes, instinctively sharpened by love, that Lucy had been crying.

'Have you seen the Master?' she asked, with a little catch in her voice.

'Yes, oh yes! he is better to-day, and giving the nurse quite a discourse upon the parables. You remember what lovely sermons he used to preach upon the parables?'

The Master's wife smiled; she remembered every word of them. They were her comfort and stay now, those old sermons of the Master's; they made the way quite clear before her; they removed all the difficulties. She would have been shocked if she had known that that nurse from Addenbroke's had been so presumptuous as to attempt to explain the parables he knew so much about to the Master.

'You must get me a volume of his sermons, my

dear—his first sermons; I may have forgotten some of them; and Mary shall read them. It will not be like hearing his voice, but—it—it will bring back something of the old time.'

Lucy stayed longer than she had intended at the lodge. She had only reckoned to look in and pay a short visit to each sick-room, and have a chat with Cousin Mary, and go away; but she had to go to the Master's library and fetch that volume of sermons before she went.

The Senior Tutor was sitting down in the Master's place at the Master's writing-table, answering the Master's letters, when Lucy went into the library. It would be his own place soon. He usually came over to the lodge for an hour in the afternoon now, and attended to whatever college business there might be to attend to, and look through the Master's college correspondence. He used to go through it with Mary once, when she opened the Master's letters; now he went through it alone.

He rose when Lucy came in, and made her sit down in her old seat by the window. He wanted her to talk about herself. He was sure she missed his help; she would never be able to pass the Little-go without some more lessons.

They taught beautifully at Newnham. They teach conscientiously at women's colleges: they don't believe in tips and short-cuts, and mere getting up of likely passages: they plod industriously through the dull, dreary round. The Senior Tutor didn't believe in Lucy's plodding; he would have liked to give her a tip or two.

Lucy declined to talk about herself; she was full of the dear old people upstairs, and the affecting scene she had witnessed in the Master's room.

'He is getting weaker every day, in body as well as mind,' the Tutor said thoughtfully. 'He has not had nearly such good nights lately.'

Unconsciously he was keeping a barometric measure of the Master's increasing weakness. It

is not an ennobling thing to wait for dead men's shoes.

'No-o,' said Lucy, 'but I hope she will go first;' and then she burst into tears. 'Oh, I don't know how we shall tell her that he is gone!'

'Do you think at her age she would feel it so keenly? The separation could not be long.'

'Oh, you don't know what her love is. It seems only to have grown with the years.'

The Tutor sighed, and looked out of the window into the garden beneath, and his thoughts wandered away to a time long past, when such a love might have been his. Perhaps his fancy had gone back to a brown-haired girl, who had waited for him until her face had grown wan and her eyes sad with waiting, and who had not had Mrs. Rae's patience. Well, she would have been old and florid and stout now, and her sweet face—it was sweet once—would have been seamed and wrinkled with the cares of, oh, so many children!

Well, it was just as well as it was. The Tutor

recalled his wandering thoughts, and looked at Lucy.

She was quite worth looking at as she sat in the window-seat. Her face was graver and sadder, and her eyes were steadier, and her lips were not so loose as they once were. It is astonishing how girls' lips tighten after six months in a women's college. Perhaps this is due to their difficulties with mathematics, and to the anxiety that ethics and Latin prose give them, to say nothing of modern languages and natural science.

She had certainly grown more womanly since she had been at Newnham: that added seriousness supplied just the charm that was lacking. Perhaps it was quite as well that brown-haired girl had not waited.

'Do you think you could love anyone so long, Lucy?' he said presently.

It was not the words, but the voice in which he said them, that made Lucy look up and her face grow warm beneath his eyes. She was dreadfully

angry with herself for blushing. It was quite idiotic for a girl to turn as red as a poppy when a man old enough to be her father addressed her.

She shook her head.

'Not a man you loved very much, Lucy? Mrs. Rae must have loved the Master dearly for her love to have lasted so long. I'm afraid to say how many years she waited for him.' And again the Tutor sighed: that brown-haired girl had soon grown sick of waiting.

Again Lucy shook her head.

'I am not like the Master's wife,' she said.

She was thinking of Wyatt Edgell. Why would men make such large demands upon a woman? All women were not made on such large lines. Why would they not be content with a little reasonable love—the calm, steady flame that would burn very well if nothing happened to put it out? What more could they want?

'I think you would make quite as good a Master's wife,' he said, bending over her with that warm

light in his eyes that had brought the poppy-colour to her cheeks; and he had taken her hand. 'I think your love will be quite as well worth winning. I hope yours will be as happy a life, dear Lucy, as hers, and that it will be crowned with a fuller and more perfect joy——'

There is no knowing what would have happened if Lucy had not at that moment suddenly remembered that Mrs. Rae was waiting for the book of sermons she had sent her to fetch. She snatched her hand away from the Senior Tutor's just in time, and made a hurried excuse that Mrs. Rae was waiting for her to read to her; and she took the first volume of the Master's sermons she found on the shelf, and ran out of the room.

She could hardly trust herself to read to Mrs. Rae. She made a dreadful mess of her favourite sermon. Whatever other talents she had developed at Newnham, she had not developed a talent for reading sermons. It brought the tears into the dear woman's eyes to hear her; she thought of the

kind voice that was so sweet to her ears, that she had last heard breathing those well-remembered words, and she turned her worn white face to the pillow to hide her tears.

'You are sure the Master is no worse to-day?' she said to Lucy as she came away.

'Oh yes, quite sure. He was preaching quite a sermon to nurse on the Prodigal's return.'

Lucy was just in time as she hurried out of the college gate to meet the men coming in from the examination.

They were looking worn and tired, and some were looking glum, and others had assumed an air of cheerfulness that sat ill on their anxious faces. One or two had the examination papers in their hands, and were adding up with their friends the questions they had scored off. The process did not seem to give them unmixed satisfaction.

Lucy thought that her lover must already have passed through the court, as he was not among the crowd at the gate, and she was congratulating her-

self on having escaped him, when she saw him coming across the road.

She couldn't run away; she was obliged to stop in the face of all those men at the college gate and shake hands with him. She wasn't at all sure he would not take her in his arms before them all. There was no saying what he would do. He never did anything like other men; he did not measure the world and its customs with the impulse of the moment. Was not the world made for him?

Wyatt Edgell didn't take her in his arms, and he didn't kiss her in the face of all the men assembled at the college gate, but he walked back by her side to Newnham.

'Well,' she said eagerly, 'and how have you done?'

He was glad to see she was flushed and eager; he didn't know it was the fear of what he was going to do that had moved her and heightened her colour.

'I have been thinking about you every day,' he

said. 'If I have not done well it will be your fault, not mine.'

She would much rather he had been thinking about his work, but she did not say so.

'It is nearly over,' she said, with a little catch in her voice; 'only one day more. What will you do when it is over, when you have nothing more to work for?'

'I shall come to you for my reward.' His eyes were blazing down upon her with a sudden heat of passion that made her tremble. 'I shall come to-morrow night, after the exam. is finished. I shall come to the old place in the lane.'

He did not tell her that he had been there every morning of the week.

'It is so hard to get out of nights,' she said. 'We are not expected to go out after Hall.'

He stopped in the middle of the path and laughed.

'Ah!' he said. 'No lovers allowed, and all that sort of thing; no whispering beneath the moon.

Never mind, my dear; if they won't let you whisper beneath the moon, I've no objection to lamplight. If you must not meet me in the lane, Lucy, I shall come up to the front-door.'

'Oh, I'm sure that will never do!' she said, almost tearfully; she was dreadfully afraid he would keep his word. 'They wouldn't let you come in, I'm sure. You are not a brother—or—or a cousin——'

'No, my dear, thank God! I am neither of these undesirable things. I am a lover—my darling's own true lover!'

'Then I'm quite sure they won't admit you!' Lucy said very decidedly. 'Lovers are not even mentioned in the rules.'

'Well,' he said, shrugging his shoulders. They were such handsome, manly shoulders. They didn't stoop, or droop, they were not round or misshapen, or one an inch higher than the other, like so many scholars' shoulders. They were broad, and square, and manly, and they had the strength of a giant.

He rowed five in his college boat, and was the best 'forward' in the 'Varsity football team. 'Well,' he said, looking down at the girl's dainty profile, and the curve of her soft cheek, and the dimple in her chin—he had looked at them afar off across the benches in the college chapel every Sunday since Lucy had first come up—'well, my dear, if they won't admit me at the front-door, I must find some other way. "Love laughs at locksmiths."'

He was still looking down at her profile—it was not very far off now, it was very near his shoulder —and he had possessed himself of her hand, when three girls came slowly up to the gate where they were standing.

Lucy saw Pamela's face a long way off, and her heart sank within her. She remembered suddenly that she was late for tea, and she snatched her hand away, and ran hurriedly down the path, and left him standing there to meet Pamela, and Maria Stubbs, and one of the younger Dons who had a deeply-rooted prejudice against lovers.

CHAPTER XXI.

A BLOW TO NEWNHAM.

Lucy saw no more of Pamela until after Hall. She thought she had escaped—quite escaped. After all, Pamela had not seen much; she had only seen Wyatt Edgell talking to her at the gate. Other girls talked to men at the gate—brothers, cousins, even coaches sometimes—when they had anything particular to say that couldn't wait for the proper opportunity, but lovers never.

It had gone so far that Lucy was obliged to admit that he was a lover. She admitted with a sigh what other girls—what Pamela Gwatkin, what Maria Stubbs—would have given anything—every-

thing, even renounced the higher culture—to have been able to admit.

Capability Stubbs was walking with Pamela when they came across the lovers at the gate of Newnham. Capability took in the whole scene in a moment; perhaps she took in rather more. She coloured it with her own vivid imagination; she surrounded it with an atmosphere entirely her own. There was not a detail in the picture that was not brought out distinctly by this mental process and stamped upon her memory.

She was thinking about it all the time she was at Hall. She had no appetite for her dinner. She couldn't get the picture of the lovers parting at the gate out of her eyes. She sat staring across the soup, and the entrée, and the gooseberry-tart, at the white wall opposite. Perhaps it was all photographed there: the manly figure with the great square shoulders; they were stooping now, and the head was bent—it was almost touching Lucy's hair—and his eyes were looking into hers,

and his lips were smiling—— Pah! what is the use of describing the lips of another girl's lover?

Miss Stubbs broke off abruptly, and began to press the gooseberry-tart upon her neighbour. She had quite forgotten until now that it was her duty to look after Pamela. All the girls who go in for a Tripos are under special surveillance during the time of their examination, and a keeper is deputed to watch over them and see that they take their food properly and go to bed at ten o'clock. It was Maria Stubbs' duty to look after Pamela. The soup had gone by and the meat, and she had never once thought about her charge. Perhaps she hadn't eaten a morsel. She was looking white and hollow-eyed, and had that starved appearance peculiar to scholars whose brains absorb all the material intended for the body. She did not look as if she had eaten a good dinner, as if she had gone conscientiously through the *menu*. In point of fact, Pamela had only trifled with her plate, and finding that her keeper was not watching, had

not eaten a morsel, and now there was only the gooseberry-pie left.

Maria Stubbs pressed the pie upon her with tears in her eyes. She entreated her, if she valued her place in the Tripos, if the honour of Newnham was dear to her, to partake of that pie; but Pamela was not to be persuaded.

Conscience-stricken, Maria got up from the table and retired to her room. Half an hour later she emerged from it with a tray, and hurried down the corridor to Pamela's door. She didn't find her working as she expected—it was the very last night for work; to-morrow the examination would be over. She found her sitting at the window looking out at the sunset.

Pamela was not generally fond of sunsets, and she never sat at the window like other girls. She had no time to spare for sunsets, and she preferred the Windsor chair at her writing-table to any other chair in the room. It was empty now, and her books were closed, and her papers were all put

tidily away. She had quite done with them, and she was looking out of the window.

Maria put down the cup of cocoa and the cake she had brought on a little table by Pamela's side, and watched her while she took it. She took it obediently. It was less trouble to take it than refuse it, but she didn't put any heart in it.

'It will all be over soon, dear,' Maria said by way of encouragement.

'Yes,' Pamela said wearily, and she looked out at the white gate which someone had left open. Perhaps she was thinking that she would soon pass through it, and her life here would be ended.

Maria looked in the same direction; but the gate brought something else to her mind, and she forgot all about Pamela and the cocoa.

'Oh, the pity of it!' she murmured; and her eyes lingered on the spot where Wyatt Edgell had last stood.

'The pity of what?' Pamela said impatiently.

She was nervous, irritable, over-strung, and everything jarred upon her.

'Nothing, dear, nothing,' Maria said soothingly. 'I was only thinking of the man that girl is fooling. Oh, what idiots men are! Fancy a man—a real man, not a fool—throwing himself away upon that pink-and-white baby!'

Pamela was listening with an abstracted air, but the colour crept up under her skin, and her lip curled.

'You mean the St. Benedict's man?' she said, smiling with a sort of contempt.

'Yes; the man that was talking to her at the gate. Oh, Pamela, did you see his face?'

'Ye—e—s; I saw his face. I have often seen him before. He is Eric's friend. I have known him ever since he has been up.'

'He has known you—you, Pamela—for years, and yet he has chosen her?'

'There is no accounting for taste—at least, for men's taste,' Pamela said scornfully; but she did

not look at the girl she was speaking to; she looked out at the sunset.

'I tell you what it is,' Miss Stubbs said with an air of conviction. 'He has been dreaming all his life about the ideal woman, and what his fancy has painted her; and with this myth, this creation of his own heated imagination in his mind, he has met this—this baby, and he has invested her with all the attributes of his ideal. It isn't Lucy Rae he's in love with; it's the ideal woman that he has been all his life imagining.'

Pamela smiled in a dreary way, but she still watched the sunset.

'Perhaps the circumstances—the very unusual circumstances — under which he first met her had something to do with it,' Maria went on in a lower voice. She was thinking of that scene in St. Benedict's that Lucy had described to her. 'Oh, you don't know what a meeting it was, Pam!'

'Yes,' said Pamela, with a little break in her

voice, 'I know what it must have been to her; but no one can tell what it was to him.'

'You have heard, then! How did you hear?' Maria asked breathlessly.

'She told me. She told me the first night; she could not sleep, and I found her wandering about the corridor in a panic of fear.'

'Did she tell you all—quite all?'

'She told me everything,' Pamela said; and again her lips quivered.

'Has she told you she has promised to marry him?'

'No, she has not told me that,' Pamela said with that rising tell-tale colour in her cheeks, and a hard steely light in her gray-blue eyes, which were no longer watching the sunset; 'but I don't think she will marry him.'

'I am sure she will not marry him,' said Maria hotly; 'she will fool him and ruin his life. She is too great a coward to marry him!'

'She would be a brave woman to marry him,

knowing what she knows,' Pamela said with the hot blood in her face again; 'but I don't think she will spoil his life.'

'Oh, you don't know! How should you know, you who are made on such large lines? He has placed the keeping of his life—think of it: of his life, body and soul!—in her hands. He believes that nothing but the love of a woman can save him; and he has implored her—that poor thing—to be a tower of strength to him.'

'Her!' Pamela murmured with her scornful lips, and the rising colour in her face.

'Yes, dear, he has asked *her*. He has made the mistake that men always do make: he has asked the wrong woman. He ought to have asked you or me. I don't think we should have failed him, Pam. We should not stop at the tower; we should have gone down—down into the mud and the mire. There is no depth so deep where our love would not have followed him, and we should have lifted him up. I am quite sure we should have lifted him up; we

should have dragged him out of the very jaws of death and hell itself, if we had perished in doing it. Oh, I am sure that our love would have saved him! We should not have stopped at the tower.'

Maria stopped, not at the tower, but for want of breath. The red sunset light had quite faded out of the sky, and the gray night was closing in, and already the shadows were filling the silent room.

Pamela drew back from the window into the shadow.

'No,' she said hoarsely, 'we should not have stopped at the tower.'

The next day was the last, the very last, day of the examination for the Mathematical Tripos. It was the last, the very last, opportunity of making up for all the failures and mistakes of the past week. The front place of the year was to be won or lost on that last day. Its result would be final, quite final.

No wonder Maria Stubbs' conscience smote her when she remembered how she had neglected

Pamela at Hall the previous day. She tried to make up for it at breakfast. She plied her with eggs and ham and porridge, but Pamela had no appetite for these dainties; she implored her with tears in her eyes to consume at least a spoonful of porridge, but Pamela was not to be moved. She went fasting to the exam., and Maria went with her so far as the door. She went quite early—girls always do go earlier than the men; they are always in their places, calm and collected, five minutes before the time, when the men generally arrive breathless at the door just as the hour is striking.

As Pamela walked up King's Parade in the sweet June sunshine, Wyatt Edgell passed her on the way from St. Benedict's to the Senate House. He was swinging along at a great pace, with the bearing of a man who was assured of an easy victory. His eyes were shining and his lips were smiling as they had smiled at Lucy. He had no eyes for any other woman; he passed the Newnham girls

without seeing them. His mind was full of the ideal woman who had promised to meet him in the lane when the exam. was over.

Maria Stubbs remembered the tower, and flushed scarlet; but Pamela shivered. She was looking dreadfully pale when Maria left her at the door. She would have liked to have gone in with her and sat by her side and held her pens, or picked up the blotting-paper, or collected her papers; but the examiners were inexorable, and Maria came sadly away.

Pamela pulled off her gloves and glanced over her paper; it was about as nice a paper as the last day's paper of the Mathematical Tripos usually is. There were several questions that Pamela had got at her fingers' ends; they would have puzzled the men, doubtless, but to a Newnham girl, who had worked for her Tripos as conscientiously as Pamela had worked, they were a mere bagatelle. She pulled off her gloves and glanced over her paper, and began work in the quiet, methodical way in

which the students of women's colleges take their examinations. There was no heat, no excitement, no hurry whatever, nothing to disturb or bewilder.

She ought to have done uncommonly well with those nicely fitting questions; but instead of working she sat staring at her paper. The examiner, walking up and down the room, between the tables, noticed her abstraction. Once he paused and asked her if she was not feeling well; and then suddenly it dawned upon her that the time was going on, and that she had not yet begun. She had never felt it so hard to begin before; she had never felt that strange reluctance, like a clog upon her memory, that made the wheels of that fine bit of machinery drag heavily.

The reluctance—it was nothing more—grew and grew upon her. The questions were quite easy; she could have answered them with the smallest effort, but her mind refused to grapple with them.

It was like bringing a horse to the water; the water was cool and delightful, and it had only to

stoop and drink ; but it would not stoop. Pamela could do nothing as she sat there with the time slipping by but think of the man she had met in King's Parade, and wonder how he was getting on at the Senate House over the way with the paper that lay before her. She followed his progress question by question, and when she had come to the end of the paper she gave a sigh of relief—a big sigh, for the examiner who was at the other end of the room heard it, and the girls sitting opposite heard it and looked up.

They saw a very common sight in an examination-room—a girl with a gray dead face slipping off a chair to the floor. Pamela had fainted.

They brought her to, somehow, though everybody was begrudging the time she spent upon her ; and then somebody took her back in a fly to Newnham.

It was an awful blow to Newnham. Everybody reproached Maria Stubbs. She hadn't half looked after her. Nothing that anybody said hurt poor

Maria like the prickings of her own conscience. She was guilty in the matter of that last Hall. She had forgotten all about her charge until the gooseberry-pie !

She nursed Pamela tenderly all through that wretched day. She did what she could to atone for her past neglect. She brought her little messes of Liebig and arrowroot every hour ; she watched beside her with the patient fidelity of a dog, while Pamela would have given worlds to be left alone in her darkened room. She locked the door against her officious nurse once, when she had gone out to fetch the everlasting beef-tea, and Maria made such a ridiculous noise outside, that threatened to bring all the Dons upon her, that she was obliged to get up and open it again. There was nothing to be done but to turn her face to the wall, and let the faithful creature potter about her to her heart's content.

CHAPTER XXII.

READING THE LISTS.

It was the oddest state of things that can be imagined at Newnham all through that next week. The order of everything was reversed. It had been all work—real, desperate work—now it was all play.

It was hard work enough to get through the days. The exams. were all over. There was nothing for the girls to do but to wait with what patience Heaven had given them for the lists to be out. Some of them were already quite indifferent to the lists, and when the strain was over had gone to bed, like Pamela, and turned their faces to the wall. Others had locked their doors and gone

through their papers over and over again, and had made up their minds exactly where they should be placed when the lists came out. Some, more wise than the rest, had put their papers in the fire, and relieved their overburdened minds with large doses of fiction.

There was not a book opened in Newnham through all that week but yellow-backs. Annabel Crewe declared that she had read eleven before the week was half out, and a Natural Science girl had discovered that an infallible method for distracting one's thoughts from 'ologies' was to keep three sensational novels going at once.

One by one the Tripos lists came out, and the girls who had gone to bed for good thought better of it, and got up again, and came down to be congratulated, and admired, and made much of. The foolish virgins who had burnt their papers, and behaved with corresponding frivolity through all their University career, received the due reward of their folly, and were snubbed and condoled with in

the most approved fashion. If one is down one must expect to be sat upon, or what would be the advantage of success?

The women's colleges had nothing to complain of. They had more than one first-class in every Tripos. They had beaten the men on their own ground; they had not only kept their place, but they were coming more and more to the front every year. They will win their degrees soon. Already the opinion of the Senate is equally divided; very soon the balance will be in their favour, and then all things will be possible.

The list of the Mathematical Tripos is read out last of all. It is not read until May Week has well begun, when the boat-races are half over, and the college concerts are in full swing, and picnics on the river and luncheons in college rooms are the order of the day.

The list is read out inside the Senate House, as befits the dignity of the occasion; but this particular year it was rumoured that the lists would

be read out from the steps. Some distinguished visitors were expected at noon, and the Senate, in their zeal for the encouragement of learning and other virtues, were about to confer upon them Degrees of Honour, and the Senate House was full of carpenters preparing for the auspicious occasion.

Half an hour before the appointed time for reading the list the girls of Girton and Newnham and the men from every college in Cambridge assembled on the clean-shaven lawn before the south door of the Senate House. It was a glorious June morning, and the crowd could afford to wait. Having waited so long, they could wait a few minutes longer. To some those few minutes were a boon; the delay enabled them to pull themselves together, and bear with what courage and resignation they could call to their aid the fateful verdict they would presently hear read out.

The girls were more impatient than the men. They had reached the spot a quarter of an hour earlier, and had secured all the front places.

They crowded the steps of the Senate House to the very doors, and they filled the broad path beneath the windows. A cool, compact, delightful crowd—a bevy, one might almost say—a bit of bright refreshing colour amid the rusty gowns and limp, disreputable caps of the undergraduates.

But the lists were not read out from the steps, and the girls crowded round the Senate House doors in vain. When it wanted a few minutes to the hour a window was opened just above the heads of the girls on the path, and a man looked out. He wore an M.A. hood, and there was a Proctor hiding away behind him in a white tie. The men sent up a shout and a howl—a shout for the examiner and a howl for the Proctor, who happened to be unpopular. The faces of the girls who had crowded up the steps and round the doors fell. They had expected to be in the very best place, and they were quite out of it. They could look on the eager faces of the men below them and the girls in the crowd, if this was any com-

pensation. They could see how vainly the men strove to hide their anxiety beneath a veil of indifference or careless hilarity, and how the girls made no pretence at all of concealing their feelings, but looked as if they would like to tear that bland little examiner at the window limb from limb.

Among the girls who thirsted for his blood was Maria Stubbs. She had come quite early—one of the first—and she had settled herself on the top step just outside the Senate House door, and she awaited with devouring anxiety the reading of the list. It was not her list; it was Pamela Gwatkin's list. She had left her at Newnham in bed, with the curtains drawn to keep out the daylight, and she had taken away her watch, that the dreaded hour should not disturb her, and she had gone in at the last moment, and found her broad awake, with her weary eyes watching the door. She need not have troubled herself to take away the watch. Pamela knew the time to a second. She had been

counting the hours all the night, and now she was counting the minutes.

'You are going to the Senate House?' she said, looking up. 'You needn't hurry back. I know exactly where I am.'

'We all know where you ought to be,' Maria said, hanging her head. 'The men would have been nowhere if it hadn't been for my wicked neglect!'

She was so angry with Lucy for being the innocent cause of her preoccupation that she wouldn't let her walk with her to the Senate House. She would hardly let her stand on the steps beside her, but Lucy wasn't to be pushed aside. She had as much interest in the list that was about to be read as Miss Stubbs.

There were a great many mothers and fathers and sisters and cousins there of the men whose names would presently be read out, and there might have been some sweethearts present; but there was not a single girl in all that crowd of

sweet young English womanhood that did not envy Lucy.

'Time, sir, time!' the men shouted, and the examiner smiled benignly down on the crowd beneath.

'Time! time!'

How eager the men were! They couldn't all be Senior Wranglers!

Perhaps there were not many expectant Senior Wranglers there. It is not often that a man whose name is on every lip has the courage to face the ordeal. There is always a chance of disappointment. Wyatt Edgell was not among the crowd. Lucy must have seen him from her elevated place on the steps as she looked down at the upturned faces of the men, had he been there. Eric Gwatkin was close beneath the window among a crowd of St. Benedict's men, but Edgell was not among them.

'Time! time!' the men shouted, but the examiner only smiled and looked at his watch.

The minute-hand of the clock of great St. Mary's had travelled round to within a few seconds of the hour. A Proctor who was standing near the examiner, with the list in his hand, looked down at the crowd of undergraduates beneath with an eye to business, and took down the names of the men who were making a row.

It was the unpopular Proctor, and at the sight of his unwelcome face at the window the crowd beneath set up a groan, and in the midst of the groan the clock of the University church struck nine.

'Time!'

It was time indeed. The examiner opened the list, and held up his hand for silence. The men were still groaning as he read out the first name on the list:

'Senior Wrangler — Wyatt Edgell, St. Benedict's.'

The St. Benedict's men set up a great shout, and Eric Gwatkin waved his cap in a ridiculous manner. Lucy would have liked to wave her hat, too, she

was so absurdly elated. She hadn't thought what a great thing it was to be Senior Wrangler until she saw how the crowd applauded. She quite flushed with triumph ; it was her victory—hers ! If it had not been for her, her lover would not have thought the prize worth winning. He had won it for her sake !

She was so proud and happy she did not hear another name in the list. What did the disappointment of others matter to her? Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes were dancing with triumph. Oh, it was a proud thing to have a lover a Senior Wrangler !

Pamela Gwatkin was only equal to fifth—fifth Wrangler—and when Maria Stubbs went down the steps of the Senate House Lucy saw she had tears in her eyes. Of course, she was crying for Pamela's defeat. As if Pamela could have had any chance against her lover !

Lucy ran nearly all the way back to St. Benedict's. She wanted to be the first to congratulate

her lover. Fast as she ran, Eric Gwatkin was there before her.

There was a strange hush in the outer court as she entered the college gate. There was no shouting like she had heard in the street and in the Senate House yard. There was a strange, ominous silence. The men were standing about the court in knots, and the porter was talking to a little group of men at the gate.

Lucy's heart sank within her. Had anything happened to the Master or Mrs. Rae? She thought the men looked at her with a strange kind of pity as she passed through the court, and they took off their caps as she passed. It was quite an ovation. Her lover was Senior Wrangler. She was quite in a flutter of pride and expectation; still, her heart sank within her.

Eric Gwatkin met her in the cloister; he was hurrying across to the lodge. She thought he was coming to tell her. What else should he come to the lodge for? The Master was past telling.

'Oh!' she cried, running to meet him, 'how does he bear it? You have told him——'

She paused, and her voice faltered with the question on her lips. Eric's face was white and anxious, and he was not smiling. He was not the least like the man who was waving his cap under the window of the Senate House.

'You have not heard——' he said.

'Heard what?' she cried impatiently. 'Is the Master——'

'No—no,' he interrupted; 'it is not that—it is not the Master.'

'It is Mrs. Rae?' she said, with a chill feeling at her heart. She was sure something had happened.

'No, it is not Mrs. Rae. Oh, Miss Lucy! how can I tell you?'

'It is *he!*' she said in a stricken voice, and with that dreadful feeling at her heart. 'Oh! what has he done?'

She was standing wringing her hands in the

middle of the cloisters, and the men were passing through, and everyone could see her.

'Hush!' Eric said almost harshly; 'he has not done anything—at least, he has only done what others do at this time. There was a bump supper last night, and—and Wyatt was there; and when Mr. Colville went in this morning to tell him of his great success, he was on the floor in one of his old attacks. It is all over the college, and everybody is dreadfully shocked—that is all!'

'All!' Lucy said bitterly. 'You speak as if the shame and exposure were nothing. Oh, I shall never be able to face it!' She only thought of herself.

Eric Gwatkin was very sorry for her. He would have spared her if he could. It was better for her to hear it from his lips than from others.

'He has done great things,' he said. 'It was enough to turn anybody's head. He will go down in a day or two, and the temptation will not occur again. You do not know—how should you?—how

great the temptation is—what a supreme moment this is in a man's life !'

'No,' Lucy said, with a shiver, 'I do not know.'

They had reached the door of the lodge while they were talking together, and Eric had rung the bell.

'Why do you ring ?' she said sharply.

He hung his head.

'I came over to see if Nurse Brannan can be spared for a few minutes,' he said guiltily.

'Is he so bad as that ?' Lucy asked ; but she did not offer to go to him.

'Ye—es ; he is very bad. Mr. Colville is with him, and he thought that the nurse ought to be with him until the doctor comes.'

'You have sent for a doctor ?'

'Yes ; the Tutor has sent for a doctor, and—and he has noticed that scar.'

'And you have told him ?'

'Yes ; I have told him. How could I help it ?'

Lucy went into the lodge covered with shame and humiliation. She was so proud and happy

when she entered the college gate. She had made up her mind to tell Cousin Mary all about her engagement. She was going to her to be congratulated—to be envied and congratulated by everybody in Cambridge. Now she wouldn't have owned it for the world. How lucky she hadn't told Mary!

CHAPTER XXIII.

'GOING DOWN.'

It was rather hard to spare Nurse Brannan on this particular morning; harder than usual. The Master had passed a bad night; he had not slept at all, and he was decidedly weaker. He had been wandering all through the night, and he was still wandering feebly when Lucy came into his room in the morning. He had been going over the old scenes of his youth; he had been travelling back to the sweet green fields and the hills and valleys of his earliest recollections.

When Lucy came into the room he was propped up in bed, babbling about the old scenes and the old

places. The blind was drawn up, and the June sunshine poured into the room. Nurse Brannan never denied her patients sunshine. 'Let them have it while they may,' she used to say; 'they will have no need of it by-and-by.' The sun was shining into the room now, and on to the bed, and on to the face of the old Master.

Lucy had not seen him for several days; she had been busy with her examinations, and she was struck with the change in him—an indefinable change that sharpened his rugged features as if a chisel had been passed over them. They were rugged still, but with an added nobleness, and there was a light upon them that Lucy had not seen there before. His dim blue eyes were looking up at the window, and he did not see her come in the room. They were looking with that shining light in them above the gray battlements of the old court to the bright bit of blue sky beyond.

'I think he can be safely left,' Lucy said; 'he is

very quiet. I will stay with him till you come back. You must not be long; I have an examination at ten o'clock. You must not stay more than half an hour.'

Nurse Brannan promised to come back within the half-hour, and Lucy took her place beside the bed. She had a dim idea that she ought to have gone herself to Wyatt Edgell in his humiliation, not have sent a hired nurse, but she put the thought away from her. It was not a real engagement, she told herself. She had only consented to it to give him a motive for work. He could not hold her to it now; no one could expect her to be bound by a promise given under such conditions. How lucky it was that no one at St. Benedict's knew of her engagement!

The Master would not let her thoughts wander long. His hands were feebly groping about the coverlet of the bed, and Lucy saw that he was making an effort to get up.

'No, dear Master,' she said; 'no, I wouldn't get

up yet. I would wait till nurse comes back; she will be here soon.'

'I was going to meet her, my dear,' he said; 'I have been travelling all night. I came by the coach to the cross-roads; it is a long journey from Cambridge, and I am very tired. I thought it would never end, and the morning was slow in breaking. It broke at last; I never saw a finer sunrise, a higher dawn. The coach put me down at the cross-roads; I had nothing to carry—I had left everything behind—and I have been walking over the hills since daybreak. It's wonderful how little they have changed: I knew every field and hedge on the way; and the old trees and the milestones in the road, I knew them every one; and the broken cross in the churchyard, and the old gray tower. The tower looks taller now than it used to, and the vane was shining in the sunlight as I came along; I could see it a long way off, gleaming like gold, and pointing the way.'

The old Master paused for want of breath; he

had worn himself quite out. He lay back on the pillow, with the sunshine streaming on his worn face. Lucy could not help noticing how shining it was—shining like the old vane.

'Strange,' he went on presently, talking to himself in a lower tone—'strange! the cross was there, and the church, and the tower, and the old elms in the yard, and the rooks cawing in the branches—I knew the cawing of those old rooks again—but I could not find the Vicarage gate.'

Lucy was beginning to get impatient. Nurse Brannan ought to be back by this time. Her examination would begin in a quarter of an hour. She didn't care anything about that Vicarage gate; there was nobody waiting for her at the gate.

The Senior Tutor came in while she was fuming and fretting about the time.

'I thought you would want to get away,' he said to Lucy, 'so I came over to sit with the Master. We can't spare Nurse Brannan just yet.'

Cousin Mary came in, too, just after him; she

generally came into the room a minute or two after the Senior Tutor. She had not been able to come in before, she was in such close attendance on the Master's wife. Mrs. Rae had had a restless night, but had just fallen asleep, so Mary had stolen away.

'This is a dreadful thing about Mr. Edgell,' she said. 'The college was so proud of him; it will be a terrible blow.'

'Yes,' said the Tutor; 'it will be a great blow. It is unfortunate it should have happened just now; it will get so talked about.'

He was thinking of the credit of the college, not of Wyatt Edgell.

'What will he do?'

'Oh, he will go down with his friends. I have telegraphed for them; they will be here by noon; and when he can be moved they will take him away. It appears this is not the first time. He attempted suicide the other day; I saw the mark on his throat——'

Lucy did not wait to hear any more. She ran away as fast as she could, and left Cousin Mary and the Tutor talking by the Master's bedside.

They took no notice of her. They did not even look at her. Oh, if they had only known!

Wyatt Edgell's people came at noon. Lucy saw them crossing the old court when she came back from her examination—an elderly man with a striking resemblance to her lover, and a tall stately woman with a pale beautiful patrician face.

They ought to have been proud and happy people. This should have been a red-letter day in their lives—a day of thankfulness and congratulations and unutterable joy; a day when the tears come with the smiles, and the glad words falter on the lip, and there is a strange catch in the voice, and a dimness before the eyes, when the most eloquent speech begins and ends with a 'God bless you, my boy!' uttered in a very shaky voice.

There were no congratulations to-day and no

smiles. If there were tears no one saw them—only a hard break in the voice when Wyatt Edgell's mother thanked the Tutor for his interest in her son. She didn't even look at Lucy as she passed. Something in the rustle of her rich trailing skirts as they swept over the stones of the court brought to the mind of the Master's niece those old stories the Master was so fond of telling—of the stall in the butter-market, and the meeting of her grandfather with her high-spirited ancestress in the dancing-booth at the fair.

It was quite as well that nobody knew about that engagement.

Lucy had another examination in the afternoon —her last. She hastily swallowed some cold luncheon that was laid for her at the end of the long dining-table at the lodge. There was no one present but herself. Mrs. Rae was not so well, and Cousin Mary had a tray carried up into her room, and Nurse Brannan could not leave the Master.

Lucy had no appetite for the solitary meal. Something was choking in her throat all the time she sat at the table, and she could not swallow anything.

She looked in at the Master's room before she went off to her exam. He was still searching for the Vicarage gate. Mrs. Rae was asleep or dozing; she did not appear to notice her when Lucy opened the door of her room. Cousin Mary was still with her—she seldom left her now—and she was looking tired and worn out for want of rest. It did not occur to Lucy to offer to take her place; besides, she had to go to her exam.

'I can "go down" to-night, dear, if you like,' she said to Mary, before she went away, 'if I can be of any use here. A lot of the girls have "gone down" to-day. Term is quite over. I can either come home to-day or Monday, which you think best.'

'Nurse Brannan has not been to bed for a week,' Cousin Mary said wearily, 'and—and I'm afraid I

am getting worn out; but you must do as you like.'

Lucy went off to her exam.; but for all the good she did she might just as well have stayed away. She was very sorry for those old people at the lodge, but what else could be expected at their age? She was more distressed about her lover. Nurse Brannan had stayed with him until the paroxysm had abated, and he had sunk into a deep sleep.

He would probably awake from it, the doctor who had been called in said, not very much the worse for the carouse, and unconscious—quite unconscious—of what had happened.

What would he do when he awoke? Lucy was pondering this question in her mind all the time she was in for her exam., when she ought to have been occupied with the questions on the paper before her. She hadn't answered it when she got back to Newnham. She had only gone back to pick up some things she needed and to get her

exeat, or go through the ceremony that takes the place of an *exeat* at a college for women.

She had to say good-bye to two or three of the girls who were going down; some were going down altogether, and their paths were never likely to cross again. Among these last was Pamela Gwatkin. She was going down, broken in health and spirit, and she had no present intention of coming up to Newnham again.

She was up and dressed when Lucy went into her room to say good-bye. She was sitting at her old place at the table, tearing up some papers. She had torn up a lot already, and they were lying in a heap by her side, and Maria Stubbs was on the floor packing her books.

Pamela looked up when Lucy came into the room.

'Well?' she said, with a large look of scorn in her eyes that made Lucy's cowardly little heart sink into her shoes. 'Well?'

It wasn't very much to say, but a great deal can

be got into a word of such varied meaning. Lucy saw in a moment that Pamela knew all.

'I don't know what you mean,' Lucy said with some spirit.

'No,' said Pamela scornfully; 'I suppose not. You have not seen him then?'

'Seen him?' Lucy exclaimed, flushing scarlet, and her eyes smarting with tears of anger and humiliation. 'I never intend to see him again! His own people are here.'

'What has that got to do with it?' said Maria, sitting down on the floor in the middle of a heap of books.

'Everything. He doesn't want me if he has got his people.'

Lucy was thinking of Wyatt Edgell's mother. She had been haunted by her pale patrician face all through the exam.

'I don't see that,' Maria said hotly. 'He will want you more. You ought to stand between him and them, and see they are not too hard upon him.

I think you ought to have gone to his mother at once, and told her everything.'

'I?' Lucy gasped—'I?'

'Yes, you. 'Who else should take his part at a time like this? Oh, you are a poor coward! You are not half good enough for him!'

The tears were in her eyes as she spoke; she had to put up her hand and dash them off her hideous pale lashes. She looked as if she would have liked to have taken Lucy in her strong arms and shaken her.

'I'm afraid I am a coward,' Lucy said humbly; and then she began to cry.

She wasn't content with crying, she began to sob hysterically. She had gone through a great deal that day, and her nerves were shaken. Maria got up from the floor and came over to her. She put her on the couch, and took off her hat, and stroked her hair back, and soothed her, but Pamela took no notice of her; she only sat tearing up her papers.

'You would do the same if you were in my place,' Lucy sobbed; 'you would be afraid to venture. What girl in her senses wouldn't?'

Miss Stubbs smiled.

'I know some girls who wouldn't,' she said.

She was very angry with Lucy—angry and impatient; but that did not account for the hard break in her voice.

'Hush!' Pamela exclaimed harshly; 'it is not her fault she has so small a soul.'

'I am sure you would not do otherwise,' Lucy sobbed, not heeding the interruption. 'You would be afraid to—to marry him. Oh! who *could* marry him?'

Maria's eyes were shining, and the hand that was stroking Lucy's hair trembled; but Pamela's face was hard and stony as she sat tearing up her papers, and her thin lips were pressed tight together.

'You would never be safe,' Lucy went on, defending herself. 'You would never know what he would do. He might break out at any time—

he might kill himself, he might kill you!' The picture was too appalling, and Lucy subsided into a fresh passion of tears. 'Oh, I could never run the risk!' she said with a shiver; 'I should never be safe!'

'Not if you loved him?'

Pamela asked the question in a low voice—low and vibrating with passion. She had not intended to give a voice to her thoughts. She would have given the world to have recalled the words after she had spoken.

'No,' Lucy exclaimed passionately; 'not even if I loved him!'

'Oh, you poor thing!' said Maria Stubbs, with her eyes flashing, and her freckled face all aglow with a strange fire.

'Let her alone,' Pamela said wearily—'let her alone. How should she do otherwise? It is not her fault that she has not a large soul. Let the poor little thing alone. She can only act according to her lights. Let her alone.'

They let her alone—at least, they said good-bye to her in a strained, unemotional way. They didn't shed a single tear in that parting. Maria Stubbs kissed her on both cheeks, and told her to write to her and say how the Master of St. Benedict's was. She didn't say a word about her lover. Pamela kissed her on one cheek—at least, she made a peck at her, and said some cold, formal words of farewell, and went wearily back to tearing up her papers.

When the good-byes were said, the poor thing with a small soul crept humbly down the stairs. Everybody cannot be made on such large lines as Pamela Gwatkin.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE VICARAGE GATE.

The old Master of St. Benedict's had not found the Vicarage gate when Lucy got back to the lodge. He had been searching for it all through the long June day, and he had not found it yet. He was lying back propped up with pillows when Lucy went into his room, and the sunset light was falling on his face. All the hard lines had been smoothed out of it; the furrows that years of work and thought had stamped upon it were all smoothed out, and it was like the face of a little child.

His eyes were open, and Lucy thought he was watching the sunset. It had already slipped off the

grass in the court below, and it had climbed the chapel wall and reached the gray battlements at the top, where the bits of blue sky could be seen between. She went to the window and drew up the blind that he could follow it still higher, and he watched it with a strange wistfulness as it slid off the chapel roof, and lingered for a few moments on the spire.

Everything had slipped out of his life like the sunset light, and now that, too, was fast slipping away. He watched it until it had faded quite away, and then he closed his eyes with a sigh. Lucy watched beside him through the early part of the night; she was to call Nurse Brannan at daylight. He lay very quiet, wanting no watching, until past midnight, and Lucy thought he was sleeping. She was conscious of no overwhelming sorrow. Perhaps she could not feel things deeply like some people. He had lived his life—his useful, honourable life—and now he would pass away full of days and honour.

She wondered vaguely as she sat beside the bed in the silent room—so silent that she could hear the ticking of the Master's watch on the dressing-table—what would become of her. Things might have been different—so different; but she did not dare to think of that now. It was unreasonable of Pamela Gwatkin and Maria to blame her. No one in their senses would blame her.

Lucy could not help repeating to herself, as she sat there thinking over the events of the miserable day, Pamela's question, 'Not if you had loved him?' 'No,' she told herself impatiently, 'she would not be justified in making such a sacrifice, however much she loved him. Nothing could justify it. Girls were not expected to make such sacrifices for their lovers. No girl in her senses would think of it.'

Lucy's meditation was disturbed by the Master's rambling monologue. He had been dozing through all the early part of the night, and about midnight he awoke and began talking to himself in low,

disconnected sentences, his mind wandering off in strange fancies and old recollections, which escaped from his lips in broken sentences. He had forgotten the Vicarage gate now, where Rachel used to wait for him in those far-off days when he came back term after term from college. He had gone back in memory to an earlier time. He was a boy again in his father's fields; the old faces of his infancy and childhood were about him. He was a boy again in the old humble home, among the old humble folk.

He babbled in his rambling, disconnected way about things and people that Lucy had never heard of, only now and then she caught a familiar name that his memory had gone far back to seek. She didn't shrink now from the mention of her humble progenitors: the dear old rustic with a hayband round his legs, the dairywoman who kept the stall in the butter-market. At this solemn time these distinctions seemed but a small matter. The years had rolled back, and the rustic in his furrow and

the Master of St. Benedict's were again boys together in their father's field. There were no distinctions now to separate them ; there would be no distinctions ever again. They had all slipped away with the labour and the learning of the intervening years ; with the well-earned honours—the scarlet gown and the doctor's hood ; they were all among the things that had been. There was nothing left but love and tender trust—the heart of a little child.

The hours dragged wearily on ; it seemed to Lucy as if the sweet June night would never end. There was not a light in a single window in the college court, and there were no stars in the sky, only the clouds hurrying on their noiseless way. The silence of the darkened room seemed to the frightened watcher to grow more oppressive as the night wore on. She could hear the rapid tick, tick of the Master's watch on the dressing-table ; it could not beat the moments out fast enough. Oh, it was dreadful to hear it hurrying on, and to

know that it was ticking off at every beat the few remaining moments of a human life!

Lucy listened to it until she could bear it no longer. Should she call Cousin Mary, who was with the Master's wife in the room across the passage? She had got as far as the door to call her, and then she recollected that Mrs. Rae was always listening for any sound from the Master's room, and that she would be disturbed.

The thought of the watchfulness of the Master's wife, and the love—the faithful love that had stood the shocks of more than sixty years, and had only grown truer, and deeper, and tenderer with the years—smote upon Lucy like a blow. Oh, she had never known what love was, if this was a woman's love!

She asked herself, as she sat beside the Master's bed watching the feeble, groping hand straying over the coverlet, as if it were searching for something, what the Master's wife would have done if she had been in her place. Would her love have

stood the test? It had been all fair sailing with her—a long, long sequence of success, distinction, and honour. There had never been a cloud upon the horizon of her love; there had been no harder test than the test of years of patient waiting, and the happy fulfilment of all her dearest hopes. There had not been a single disappointment. Her love had never been tried like Lucy's.

Oh, it was too cruel that this blow should have fallen upon her! Lucy was quite sure that if her lines had fallen in such fair, still places as Mrs. Rae's, she would have made quite as devoted a wife. She would have been the tenderest and most loving wife to a successful man—to a man without any moral or mental taint, to a man of stainless reputation; but to a poor, miserable wretch, who had no control over himself, who wanted to be watched, and guarded, and restrained, who might at any moment do some dreadful thing—— Oh, no, no, no!

Lucy couldn't finish the picture; it was too

terrible. She could only throw herself sobbing on the floor beside the Master's bed and grovel on the ground with her face in her hands in a paroxysm of humiliation and despair too deep for words.

Oh, why had she such a small soul? 'I am made on such small lines,' she moaned in her self-abasement. 'I am such a mean, pitiful creature I want to be happy, and safe, and prosperous, and everything to go smooth. I cannot rise to great occasions like other women. I cannot make sacrifices that other women would love to make. I am not Pamela—I am not even Maria Stubbs!'

Nurse Brannan came in while Lucy was on the floor beside the bed. She pretended that she was kneeling—Lucy was always pretending things. There was quite sufficient reason to account for her tears and for her kneeling beside the Master's bed. All who loved him in life should have been there, where Lucy was, kneeling and weeping. There was no one else left to kneel and weep but Cousin

Mary, and Nurse Brannan fetched her presently, when she saw how near the end was.

They watched beside him until the dawn, and then the nurse drew the curtain up and let in the faint gray light of the new day. Lucy sat sobbing miserably beside the bed, and Cousin Mary held the feeble hand in hers—it was too feeble to grope any more; and the rapid beat of the Master's watch on the table beat out like a swift shuttle the solemn closing moments of the Master's life.

The sky above the chapel roof turned from gray to rose, and rose to gold. The vane on the spire caught the first gleam of the rising sun, and at the same moment the Master opened his eyes. He looked round on the group by the bedside with a glad, dazed expectation in them that had caught the brightness of another morning. He was looking round for someone; perhaps if she who he was looking for had been there he would not have seen her. His lips were moving, and Lucy bent down to hear what he was saying.

'I shall meet her at the gate,' he said. 'She is sure to be waiting at the gate.'

The sweet June morning broke, and the sun rose over the gray battlements of the old court and the roof of the college chapel; but to the old Master there was a newer day and another morning.

When Lucy came in to see the Master's wife later in the day she found her still dozing. She had not taken notice of anything or anyone all through the night. She had not missed Mary from her side; but when she heard Lucy's voice in the room — she was only speaking in a whisper — she opened her eyes, and Lucy thought she knew her.

'It is I, dear,' she said in a shaky voice. She could not keep her voice steady or the tears out of her eyes. 'It is Dick's little daughter.'

The patient face on the pillow smiled, and she moved her hand towards her — a little thin, shadowy hand, that was feebly groping about the coverlet, oh, so like the Master! Lucy took it in

hers, and smoothed it between her own soft, warm palms.

Her lips were moving, and the girl bent over her to catch the words. It was the old question; she had never anything else to ask.

'How is the Master?'

Lucy ought to have been prepared for it; but she wasn't. She was so broken down and unstrung and worn out with that night of watching that she was not prepared for anything.

'Oh, you poor dear!' she said. 'Don't you know that the Master is well? He is quite—quite well!'

'Quite well?'

'Yes, quite well.'

Then Lucy began to cry. She could not keep her tears back any longer, and Cousin Mary turned her out of the sick-room. Nurse Brannan found her sobbing in the window-seat, and ordered her to bed, where she soon cried herself to sleep.

With the unimpaired appetite of youth for sleep, Lucy slept through all the long June day. She

slept until the sunset light again touched the roof of the college chapel.

It would be slipping off it presently, like it had slipped off the day before, when the Master was here to watch it.

Perhaps he was watching it now.

Lucy would not have awakened even then, if Nurse Brannan had not aroused her.

'Come,' she said, shaking her; 'get up at once. Mrs. Rae is asking for you. Come at once, or you will be too late!'

Lucy did not stay to dress. She hurried across the passage with her hair falling over her shoulders and her dressing-gown, which she did not stay to put on properly, trailing on the ground behind her. Her nerves were so overstrung that it seemed to her that its rustle on the floor sent a whisper after her the whole length of the passage. It was like the Master's voice.

The face on the pillow had changed since she had seen it last. It was sharper and grayer, and

the breath came shorter and at longer intervals.

The shadows were already closing around her when Lucy came into the room. She no longer opened her eyes when the girl spoke to her—she would never open them again here—but her lips were moving.

Lucy bent over her with her ear to the failing lips, but she could not catch the faint, broken words.

'I cannot hear you, dear,' she said, while her tears fell on the meekly folded hands that were groping no longer. 'I cannot catch what you say. Is it about the Master?'

She had touched the right chord—the only chord that stretched across the gulf—and the feeble lips moved. They only framed a single word:

'*Where?*'

'Where is the Master?' Lucy said eagerly. 'Oh, he is waiting for you at the gate. His last—last message was: "I shall see her at the gate!"'

The face on the pillow changed. It changed as Lucy bent over it.

The great, solemn change! Over all the weakness and the weariness came, not a shadow, but a light—the wondrous light of the full fruition of her changeless love.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE STALL IN THE BUTTER-MARKET.

The Senior Tutor took all the trouble of the funeral—or the funerals, rather—off the Master's nieces. He cam over directly he heard that the Master was dead, and arranged everything. He knew his last wishes, expressed long ago when he was in health and the end seemed a long way off.

His wishes had been so clearly expressed that there could be no doubt about them. He had provided for every contingency. He was to lie beside his wife. If she preceded him, he was to be laid by her side wherever she was laid. If he should happen to die before her, he was to be carried back

to the old place, to the old churchyard where all his humble forefathers lay, to go back to where he had started, and find his last resting-place where his life had begun. In no case was he to be buried in the college chapel. They might put up a brass for him on the old walls, among the carven tombs and tablets of the old Masters and Fellows, but the dust of his bones should not mix with theirs.

The Senior Tutor carried out his wishes faithfully. He arranged everything. There was nothing for the Master's nieces to do but to see to their own humble mourning. He came over directly he heard of the Master's death, and he was coming backwards and forwards to the lodge all the day. He wanted to get a sight of Lucy; he only wanted to see her for a few minutes; he would have preferred to see her alone. He had arranged exactly what he should say, and the time had come for saying it.

Whatever it was he had to say he had to put it

off, for Lucy did not make her appearance all through that sad day.

She was so nervous and overwrought when all was over that Nurse Brannan had to put her to bed; and when she came in in the night, finding that the girl was awake and weeping, she came into her bed and lay down beside her.

Lucy could not go to sleep until she had poured out all her trouble into her sympathetic ear. She wouldn't have told Cousin Mary for the world.

Perhaps Nurse Brannan knew all about it without being told. She knew more about Lucy's lover than Lucy herself knew.

'Do you think I could do otherwise?' Lucy asked, weeping, when she had told her all her sad little story.

'Not unless you loved him very much,' Nurse Brannan said promptly. She could understand a girl doing a great deal for a man she loved.

'No—o—o,' Lucy said hesitatingly. 'I don't think I ought to marry him even then. One never

knows what he may do. I should never feel safe.'

If the room had not been quite dark, Lucy would have seen that Nurse Brannan was smiling with a contemptuous sort of pity; but, whatever she felt, she only soothed and petted the weeping girl as if she had been a little child.

'You are quite right, dear,' she said; 'one never knows what such a man will do when there is no influence strong enough to restrain him. I don't think you would be strong enough to hold him back. He ought to marry a woman with a large nature, who loved him devotedly—and I think he would tax her devotion to the uttermost.'

Lucy turned to her pillow with a sigh.

'Ah!' she murmured, 'it is the old story. I am a poor thing with a small soul!' Still, she was helped and comforted.

Eric Gwatkin came over to the lodge the next morning and asked for Lucy. He was charged with a message of condolence from her lover. She saw

him in the long gallery among the pictures of the old Masters. It was such a grave and stately place, there was no room for sentiment here. She knew the trial had come, but Nurse Brannan had helped her to meet it.

She looked such a white, weeping little Lucy as she came down the long gallery to meet him. She seemed to have grown so small, to have shrunk into herself with this sorrow that had fallen upon her, that Eric Gwatkin hesitated to deliver the message that had been committed to him. She had been so sorely tried within the last two days, how could he add to her pain? He would much rather have taken her in his arms and comforted her, and offered her their safe, sure shelter from all the storms of life. He would have given the world to have the right to take her in his arms, but he had to deliver his message.

Perhaps Lucy would have preferred it if he had. She wanted to be loved and comforted, and, above all things, to be safe.

But Eric Gwatkin had not come courting on his own account. He was only the bearer of a message of sympathy from her lover. It sounded cold and formal as it fell from Eric's faltering lips. If he had come himself and taken her in his arms, if she had felt the warmth of their strong pressure and his breath upon her cheek, it might have been different—it might have been quite different.

After all, it is the occasion that makes the heroine.

Eric delivered his message of sympathy, and Lucy stood white and downcast, with wet eyelashes and trembling lips, waiting for that other message that she knew was coming. He looked at her standing there—he was only a man—and he hadn't the heart to deliver it. He was so sorry for her. He was conscious of another feeling besides which he would not have owned for the world, but he couldn't keep it out of his eyes.

His eyes were full of tenderness, but his lips were faltering in a most absurd way while Lucy waited.

'You have another message for me,' she said presently, seeing he faltered and hesitated to speak.

'Yes,' he said, 'I have another message.' But he didn't attempt to deliver it.

If he had had no tenderness for the girl he would still have hesitated. How could he, looking at the white, shrinking little figure, lay this heavy load upon her?

'What has Mr. Edgell asked you to say to me?' she said in a thin, reedy little voice that she couldn't keep from shaking.

'You have heard,' he said huskily, and with a voice low and ashamed in his throat; 'everybody has heard what has happened. Knowing this, he has sent me to ask you if you will give him another trial. It is never likely to happen again—God helping him, it *will* never happen again—but, knowing this, and what has gone before, he has bid me to ask you if you will give him another chance.'

He paused and looked above Lucy's head; he could not look her in the face.

'His fate is in your hands,' he went on, without looking at her. 'It depends upon you whether a happy and useful life is before him. If you are true to him he will have the strongest motive to lead an honourable and honoured life that a man can have; but if you refuse to give him a chance, he will abandon all hope—he will have no inducement to make a stand.'

He said nothing about risking her happiness. It might not have occurred to him that he was asking her to risk the ruin of her young life on the chance of saving his friend. Still, he did not look her in the face.

'How can I answer him?' Lucy said, wringing her hands.

'You can only answer him as your heart dictates,' he said huskily. 'Remember, in refusing him this last chance, you are snatching away a rope from the grasp of a drowning man.'

Oh, what a coward he was: he could not look the girl in the face!

'Oh, this is horrible!' Lucy said, with a moan, and then she sat down on one of the high-backed chairs against the wall and began to cry. Her nerves were so shaken that tears came readily now.

If there was one thing more than another that Eric Gwatkin hated, it was to see a woman cry. Pamela never cried. Perhaps these foolish tears showed him more than anything else the girl's weakness. He was dreadfully sorry for her; he was sorry and ashamed of his errand. How could he press this sacrifice upon such a little weak creature?

'I am such a poor thing!' Lucy moaned, wringing her hands. 'I should never be able to influence him. Oh, you don't know how weak I am!'

Eric smiled sadly, and sighed. He knew exactly how weak she was; he would not have had a woman stronger.

'I am not like Pamela,' Lucy went on, with her little feeble moan.

'No,' he interrupted her hastily, 'thank God! You are not like Pamela.'

Lucy looked at him with wonder, through her tears, not unmixed with reproof.

'If I were Pamela,' she said, with some dignity —'if I had a great soul, and were made on larger lines, like Pamela, I should give you a different answer.'

'I must tell you,' he said hastily, interrupting her—'I must tell you, before you give your answer —your final answer—that Edgell releases you from your engagement; that he reproaches himself for having ever asked you to risk your happiness in his keeping. He begs me to say that if you have any fears or misgivings, if you have no confidence in his resolution—if you doubt him or yourself—it would be better for you to give him up.'

Lucy sighed.

'But if you can be so generous as to give him

another chance, he will never, never, God helping him, betray your trust!'

Lucy looked at him with a break in the dull misery in her face. Why hadn't he delivered this part of his message first? Why had he talked about snatching away a rope from a drowning man?

'I am very grateful to him,' Lucy said, in a small shaky voice; 'tell him I am very grateful to him. I do not deserve so much love. Ask him to forgive me if he can; I am such a poor thing. I have no courage — I cannot even be generous!'

She broke quite down. She could not trust herself to say any more. She took her lover at his word. Eric Gwatkin gave her one more chance before he went away.

'Remember,' he said, 'it is his last hope of reform.'

But Lucy only moaned, 'I am such a poor thing —I have no courage!'

He went away, and left her weeping in the gallery, under the picture of the Old Master. Surely he would have approved her decision.

* * * * *

It was a dreadful time at St. Benedict's all through that sad week. The boat that was going to do such great things—that was going to make a bump every night of the races—did not row during the three succeeding nights.

Perhaps it was quite as well that it did not; the bumps might not have come off, and, at any rate, it had the credit of them. Most of the crew had gone down; there was nothing to stay up for. All the men, indeed, who were not staying for their degrees, or who had not people up, went down at once. There was nothing to keep them here: the college concert had been put off, and the boat ball, and the supper that was to celebrate the bumps. There was not a single festivity to celebrate; there was nothing but a funeral to stay up for.

A few men stayed up for it, and all the Tutors and

Fellows. There was quite a large muster in the college chapel at the early service, when the coffins of the old Master and his wife were brought in and placed in the clear space in the body of the chapel, between the long rows of benches. There were no flowers to hide the dreary outline of the coffins —nothing to cover up their nakedness; there were no flowers heaped up in the Master's empty stall beneath the organ-loft, but someone had laid on the seat of the adjoining stall, which was draped with black, like the Master's, a wreath of immortelles. Someone—no one seemed to know who—placed the little solitary wreath on the coffin of the Master's wife, and it travelled with her down to its last resting-place.

Not a few of the Fellows of other colleges, and all the 'Heads,' followed the little sad procession to the railway-station. There were but two mourners to follow: Cousin Mary and Dick's little daughter. There were no other relatives left. The Old Master had outlived all his kin.

The Senior Tutor went down with the women to Northwold. He had made all the preparations. And as the sun was sinking at the close of the sweet June day he stood bareheaded beside the open grave, where the Master of St. Benedict's and his wife lay side by side.

They buried him in the old churchyard where his humble forefathers slept. Their stones, aslant now, and overgrown with moss and lichens, were all around him. Lucy could not help reading their rudely-carven names and homely epitaphs, as she stood listening to the solemn words that were being read over the Master's grave.

There was a Richard Rae among them who had 'died in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection.' What could he have done more if he had been Master of a college?

She lingered among the graves with the Tutor, and read the simple records of her humble race. She could trace her family back to the seventh generation; it was quite a long line of descent:

Davids and Nathaniels and Marthas and Marys, but there was only one Lucy, the high-spirited ancestress who had kept the stall in the butter-market, and met her lover at a dancing-booth at the fair.

They left the old Master sleeping among his kinsfolk, in the old churchyard that his memory had gone back to, close to the Vicarage gate. The setting sun was shining on the church tower and on the old vane that had lingered so long in his memory, and the rooks were cawing in the old elm-trees overhead, as they turned away and left him to his rest. He would sleep more peacefully here under the daisies and beneath the dewy heavens than amid the scenes of his learned labours, under the stones of his college chapel.

The mourners returned to Cambridge the next day; there was nothing to keep them here. Before they went Lucy asked the Tutor to take her to the butter-market. Everything had changed, but the old market still stood where it had stood for

centuries, with the quaint stalls and the old brown awnings, and the rude boards spread on trestles where the country folk displayed their homely wares.

There was an old woman sitting behind that corner stall now, lean and brown and wrinkled as an autumn pear. Lucy bought some flowers of her before she went away; it might have been her namesake.

It was among these homely surroundings, in this morning walk, that the Senior Tutor asked Lucy to be his wife. He knew all about her birth, and those old stories of the Master's—he had heard them dozens of times—and he had just taken her to the stall which that other Lucy Rae had once kept.

He couldn't have chosen a happier moment to press his suit. Lucy's heart had quite failed her. It had been failing her ever since that morning when she met Eric Gwatkin in the cloisters, and at the sight of that stall in the butter-market it was at its lowest ebb. She had no spirit left in her;

she had no one to cling to. She wanted to be loved and comforted and petted, and Cousin Mary was not good at petting. The Senior Tutor's offer came at the right moment; he couldn't have chosen a more auspicious time.

Lucy didn't exactly jump at him. She was too bewildered and broken down and upset generally to jump, but she asked him to give her time—to give her a week to think about it.

When a girl asks a man to give her time, he generally knows beforehand what her answer will be.

CHAPTER XXVI.

COUSIN MARY.

Lucy couldn't do things like other girls. She couldn't go straight to Cousin Mary and tell her that the Senior Tutor, the new Master of St. Benedict's, had asked her to be his wife. There was no reason why she shouldn't have told Cousin Mary. She had no one else to tell. She wouldn't have dared to have told Pamela Gwatkin or Maria Stubbs.

They had gone down now; everybody had gone down. Wyatt Edgell had gone down the day that Lucy sent back that answer to his message. He had gone without taking his degree.

Everybody was crying out at his folly, and a great many people—wise people—thought they knew the reason why, but no one guessed the real cause of his hasty departure from Cambridge.

Lucy was not sorry that he was gone. She could not have met him again in the court in the cloisters. She would not have been sure that he would not have taken her in his arms, and that all her fine resolutions would not have melted away. But he was gone down. She had nothing more to fear from him. She had an ugly dream about him the night he left Cambridge, a dream that haunted her still.

She dreamt that Wyatt Edgell was falling over the edge of a precipice, and that he held out his arms to her, but she would not reach out a hand to save him.

There was a great deal to be done in these lonely days of the Long Vacation. There was a good deal to be done, and now it could be done quietly, with no lynx-eyed undergraduates looking on.

Of course, they would have to turn out of the lodge—at least, so Cousin Mary said, when they were talking things over a few days after the Master's funeral.

The Master had behaved very generously to his niece; he had left her all the furniture of the lodge and what little money he died possessed of. He had made no mention whatever in his will of his nephew Dick's little daughter. The will had been made years ago, when Lucy's father was living, and she was not dependent on his bounty.

It was really very lucky for Lucy that the Senior Tutor had made her an offer at such a time.

'We shall continue to live together, of course, dear, if you have no other plans,' Mary said, and she paused to see if Lucy had any plans about her future, but Lucy was silent.

'I suppose you will give up Newnham now?' she continued presently, and Lucy thought there was just a shade of derision in her voice; but this was only fancy.

She might be excused for fancying it, for she had been plucked in both her examinations. She had failed in both parts of the Little-go. There was quite reason enough to account for her failing at such a time that she need not have fancied that Cousin Mary underrated her powers.

'No, I shall certainly not give up Newnham,' Lucy said with some spirit. 'I shall go in for the examination again in October. I shall continue at Newnham until—until——'

She couldn't finish the sentence, but stopped short in the middle, and blushed delightfully.

'Until what?' Cousin Mary said bluntly. She hated to see girls blushing; she never blushed herself.

'Until I am married,' Lucy said softly, and her eyes fell and her colour rose.

It was a great pity that the new Master of St. Benedict's was not there to see her.

'Married?' Mary repeated, with a little break in her voice. 'Whoever are you going to marry, child?'

She had a vision of Eric Gwatkin; she had often seen him looking at Lucy in the college chapel, and she remembered that he had called to see her several times lately. Why hadn't Lucy told her of it before?

'Mr. Colville has asked me to marry him,' Lucy said humbly.

The room didn't turn exactly upside down; if it had, all the books would have tumbled out of the shelves, and the old Worcester vases on the mantelpiece would have been broken to pieces, which would have been a thousand pities, and the furniture of the room would have been generally disarranged.

Something happened — Mary Rae never exactly knew what; she was only conscious of a band tightening round her heart, and that when she tried to speak her voice sounded a long way off.

'Mr. Colville?' she repeated in her distant, faint voice.

'Yes,' Lucy said bashfully, as if it were the first

time any man had asked her to marry him; 'but I have not given him an answer yet. What answer do you think I ought to give him?'

Cousin Mary was not going to advise Lucy on this point. She knew what answer she had been prepared to give him the last twenty years.

The Master of St. Benedict's came over to the lodge for his answer the next day. He hadn't been formally elected Master yet, but the matter was practically settled. He and Mary had been doing the Master's work together for years past.

But it was not to see Mary he came to the lodge now; he asked to see Lucy, and she came to him in the gallery.

Lucy knew exactly what he had come for, and she had his answer ready for him—quite ready. It had cost her something to make up her mind. She couldn't marry a man with gray hair—only iron-gray as yet—and with a bald spot on the crown, and with a big red throat, and bushy eyebrows, and a crop of wrinkles round his eyes, with-

out a pang. She was only twenty—sweet and twenty—and her life was before her. Yes, it cost her a pang to accept the Senior Tutor.

Perhaps it would have cost her more to reject him. He had a good deal to offer. Lucy did not lose sight of that in making up her mind. If she refused him she would have to toil through life as a governess — possibly a nursery governess. One cannot teach what one doesn't know, and a term's residence at Newnham had taught Lucy one thing: that she knew very little, and that that little was not worth much.

Perhaps if she had passed her examinations with honour—had come out in the first class—she might have given the Senior Tutor a different answer. Immense possibilities would have opened before her. She might be Senior Wrangler, Senior Classic, Senior Theologian — oh no, women are never theologians; she might have been a first class in any Tripos, and by-and-by, when the way was made clear, she might take a high degree, and

wear a scarlet hood, and—there will be such things—she might be a female Vice-Chancellor!

Now all these dreams were over. That Little-go examination had nipped her hopes in the bud. There was no other way of enjoying the highest dignity the University has to bestow than by marrying the Master of St. Benedict's. He would be Vice-Chancellor some day, and she would rule by proxy.

Lucy lay awake all one night thinking over these things. She would have preferred to marry Wyatt Edgell, all things being equal, and she shed a few small tears at giving him up. In fact, her pillow was quite wet in the morning.

She accepted the Senior Tutor the next day. She told herself that she had no more love to give away to any man: that her heart was dead within her, and that the tender dream of her youth was over, and that henceforth her life would be a dreary round of duties—perhaps dignities—but there would be no pleasure in it.

Nevertheless, when she had accepted Mr. Colville, and he had kissed her in a paternal way, and she had gone through the gallery with him, and the big drawing-room—that had been so little used during the life of the late Master—and had discussed the alterations and improvements he was going to make, she felt quite interested in life—interested, if not animated. There is nothing like furnishing for giving one an interest in life.

Mary came upon the lovers while they were discussing these details. Lucy's eyes were shining, and there were two pink spots on her cheeks which Mary had not seen there for many days, when she came across them in the big drawing-room. Mary quite understood the girl being moved, she would have been moved herself; but she did not know that the burning question that had moved Lucy so deeply was the upholstery of the drawing-room.

The new Master of the lodge had set his heart on yellow—yellow satin and dark oak. He had

seen a yellow room somewhere. Lucy loved pinks and blues, and delicate creamy tints that would match her complexion; she would not have had a yellow drawing-room for the world.

Mary came upon them when they were discussing this burning question. And then Mary had to be told.

The new Master told her in as few words as he could, and about as awkwardly as a man dealing with a new subject and addressing an unsympathetic audience. He got over it as quickly as he could. He was sure Mary would have no sympathy with him. He was sure that she despised him for his ridiculous infatuation for this little bit of a girl. He was rather ashamed of himself.

'I hope you will continue to make the lodge your home,' he said to Mary, with an awkwardness that was quite new to him; 'there is no reason why you should leave it. There is plenty of room in it for all. You will keep your old room'—'and your old place,' he was going to say; but he

checked himself in time, and said: 'I am sure your advice will be everything to Lucy.'

Mary Rae smiled; not scornfully, not even proudly, but with a sort of pity in her eyes, and her face was grave, and her voice was steady.

'No,' she said coldly; 'I could not continue to make my home here. My plans are all settled—quite settled. Lucy will stay with me—until—until she marries'—she could not help a little break in her voice—'and then I am leaving Cambridge altogether. I am going back to my old place, to my own people.'

The Senior Tutor had heard nothing about Mary Rae's people until that day; he never knew she had any people; he had forgotten all about her mother's relatives.

Cousin Mary began to make her preparations for leaving the lodge at once. She was only taking with her to the little house she had engaged at Newnham a few necessary things. She was leaving a great deal of the old furniture behind. It

had been at the lodge for over a century. It was heavy and clumsy, and some of it was worm-eaten; it was ill suited for a modern residence. It had been taken off by one Master after another, and now, unless the new Master turned it out into the court, or threw it out of the windows into the Cam, it would remain where it had so long stood.

Lucy consented to its staying almost unwillingly. She had no idea how valuable those precious old relics of carved oak, and Chippendale, and old Sheraton furniture would have been in the eyes of a connoisseur.

She didn't mind the old blue Worcester vases remaining on the mantelpiece, where they had stood so many years; but she would have preferred some modern gimcrackery for the drawing-room. Her heart yearned for little satiny chairs with gilt backs, and plush five o'clock tea-tables, and all the latest abominations of the modern upholsterer.

It was very sad work turning out all the old Master's papers, going through all his drawers

and turning out all the private records of his life.

Mary never knew until she went through his papers how generous he had been to all those poor relations she had left sleeping beside him in the churchyard at Northwold. Some of these old letters she turned out from their hiding-places, yellow with age, written by hands long folded, touched her deeply. Some were from her own kin, and some, most of all, from Lucy's father, grandfather, great-grandfather, three generations, all telling the same story of benefits received, of the unfailing liberality of that generous hand.

Mary did not know what to do with the papers. The Master had left little else—an old scholar's wardrobe, a rusty gown and hood, an old-fashioned silver watch; no rings or jewellery or knick-knacks; nothing but books and papers, everlasting papers.

Lucy would have burnt them all unread—nothing would have given her greater pleasure than

to have put all the musty old lumber in the flames; but Mary would not destroy a single line.

She gathered the old family letters together and took them away with her to the little house at Newnham; but she left all the old scholar's papers, his Semitic manuscripts and pamphlets in crabbed characters that she could not understand a line of, behind her. The labours of his long useful life she left behind to the college that had enabled him to pursue these studies. Perhaps a younger scholar coming by some day may look over the heap, and pick out from it what is worth preserving.

Mary was in a great hurry to get out of the lodge. She need not have got out until the end of the Long Vacation, but she chose to clear out at once. Lucy was a little angry at all this haste. She would much rather have stayed at the lodge than have gone into a small, uncomfortable little house at Newnham.

She wrote bewailing her lot to Maria Stubbs,

but she didn't say a word about her engagement to the Senior Tutor.

Maria answered her letter by the next post. She was staying up in town in a small lodging in Bloomsbury, in order to be near the reading-room of the British Museum, and she wrote and begged Lucy to come up and share her poor rooms. Her letter touched Lucy, and brought the tears to her eyes. She remembered how she used to hate Maria, and wouldn't notice her in the street. Her letter contained some information that interested Lucy, and may have had something to do with her tears.

Pamela's brother had gone abroad with Wyatt Edgell; he had been engaged by his family to travel with him and look after him. Pamela had only heard from Eric once since he had been away, and he had not written hopefully of his charge; but Maria did not give any particulars.

Lucy would have given the world to have seen that letter of Pamela's. She remembered what Eric had said about taking away a rope from a

drowning man, and she recollected that dreadful dream.

Oh, if she could only have seen that letter! Perhaps even now it might not be too late.

The Master—he was really Master now—came in while her eyes were yet wet with tears. He had brought with him some patterns that had just arrived for the hangings of the new rooms. It was really a serious question. The effect of everything would depend upon the colour of the hangings. In deciding this important point Lucy forgot all about Pamela's letter.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OCTOBER TERM.

October had come, and term had begun again, and Cambridge was full of new faces — fresh young faces that would soon lose their smoothness and roundness, and that delightful ingenuousness that distinguishes successive generations of Cambridge freshmen.

There were a great many girl freshers at Newnham this term, and several of the old familiar faces were no longer seen. Pamela Gwatkin had come up for another year. A scholarship, the Grace-Hardy Scholarship, which is only given to girls in their fourth year, who have done well in a Tripos,

had been awarded her to enable her to proceed to the second part of the Mathematical Tripos. When women year after year stand first on the list of the Smith's prizemen, it will be necessary to create a third part, when probably the majority of the candidates will be women.

Pamela Gwatkin had been working hard all through the Long Vacation, and she had come back pale and hollow-eyed, and oh! so lean. She will be like a deal board by the end of the year, and her beautiful, serious eyes will have nothing but mathematics in them.

Lucy had come back to work, too, but there were no mathematics in her eyes. She had just been plucked again in that horrid Part II. of the 'Previous,' which takes in Mathematics and Paley; but she had passed the classical part. She had only come up for one term. She was to be married in the spring, and she was quite, quite determined to get through the Little-go before she took her place as the wife of a Master of a college. She

wouldn't be pointed at by everybody in Cambridge as a Failure!

She had got her old room next to Maria Stubbs, and she told Maria all about her engagement the first night after Hall.

Maria didn't bully her as she expected she would, perhaps she would have done the same thing herself had she been in her place.

She thought Lucy a very lucky girl; nobody had ever fallen in love with her, and asked her to preside over a college lodge, though she was twice —a dozen times, at least—as clever as Lucy. She couldn't, for her part, think what men saw in Lucy. Cousin Mary often—indeed, she had always—wondered what the Master of St. Benedict's saw in Lucy. Mary had quite given up the lodge long ago. The shabby, old-fashioned bits of furniture that she had taken away with her had all been carried over the college bridge to the little house at Newnham. She had only taken the oldest and the shabbiest things away; she had

left everything that was worth leaving at the lodge.

People who had known her well remarked when they came up in October how much she had aged during the Long Vacation. She was not only looking, but she was feeling old and changed. Something had gone out of her life.

The Master of St. Benedict's noticed the change with a little twinge of conscience, but his hands were too full just now to think very much about any other woman than the woman he was going to marry.

The lodge was full of workpeople; the old place was being turned upside down. The plaster and the paint and the whitewash had been scraped off the old oak, and, oh, what a lot of beeswaxing it took to make it brown and mellow with that delightful old dull polish upon it that antiquaries love! There were all sorts of discoveries made during this pulling down and building up of old panelling. Rooms were unearthed, and musty old

cupboards and passages laid open, and no end of old windows that had been blocked up for centuries brought to light. Lucy had to come over to see all these discoveries, but Mary never came to the lodge again after the day she left it. That chapter of her life was closed.

Not many people congratulated Lucy on her engagement. Very few people in Cambridge knew of it. Everyone had been expecting the Senior Tutor for years to marry the Master's niece; and when, after the Long Vacation, the engagement was spoken of, nobody ever dreamed it was Lucy.

Mary had very properly gone away from the lodge until she could return as its mistress; and Lucy—well, Lucy had gone back to Newnham to fit herself for her work as a governess. Under these circumstances she got very few congratulations.

Everybody would congratulate her fast enough when the time came. She was not doing a thing that there was no precedent for. Nearly all the

heads of the Colleges in Cambridge had married young wives. It was quite the fashion.

It was not so long ago that Fellows of colleges could not marry at all, but now the order had been reversed, and the first use the dear old things made of their new liberty was to marry wives out of the nursery. As the Poet of the University touchingly put it:

> 'It hath been decreede, that ye Fellowes may wed,
> And settle in College walls;
> And wake ye echoes of cloistered life,
> With their lyttel chyldren's squalls.'

There had been no children's 'squalls' heard in the lodge of St. Benedict's within the memory of the oldest Fellow in the college; no pattering footsteps on the stairs, no children's voices in the long dim galleries, had disturbed its monastic quietness. The Fellows who in their turn had been Masters of St. Benedict's had been old, old Fellows when their turn came, and one only of all their number that anyone living could remember had taken to him a wife.

Perhaps other women were not so patient and faithful as the old Master's wife.

Lucy would not have been so patient; she was getting impatient already, now the novelty had worn off. She was not sure that she was doing the best, the very best thing she could with her life; that she was making the most of it, that she was 'arranging' it aright, as they put it at Newnham.

Her heart misgave her as she pictured her future, her prosperous future, as the wife of the Master of St. Benedict's. The quiet, stately life of a college lodge oppressed her. She was sure she should soon weary of its stateliness and its loneliness. She pictured herself sometimes standing at the old oriel window and looking down at the lusty young life in the court below and longing to be in the midst of it. She was longing already. The sight of young lovers in the college Backs filled her heart with a strange tumult, and the sound of a fiddle coming from the open window of a man's

room as she passed through the court set her feet twinkling. There is a great deal in heredity.

The Master met her at the lodge one day when she was in this mood. She had been working at mathematics all the morning, and she was nervous and over-wrought; she had been feeling a strange depression for several days, and had come over to see the alterations at the lodge in order to shake it off.

The Master took her out into the Fellows' garden to see the new greenhouse. It had been rebuilt, and, late as it was in the season, it was ablaze with Lucy's favourite geraniums. He had considered her taste entirely, and filled it with the flowers of her choice. She ought to have been grateful, at the least, and expressed her gratitude in any of the little pleasant ways that engaged people are wont to express their feelings.

She ought to have gone round sniffing the flowers, and picked the choicest red geranium and stuck it in the Master's coat; but she did nothing of the

kind. She sat down on a bench and began to cry. She couldn't keep the tears back.

Perhaps the sight of the new greenhouse had brought to her mind that scene when the old Master had fallen in the garden, and Wyatt Edgell had carried him back to the house.

Lucy couldn't account for her tears. She said it was the air of the greenhouse had made her faint, and her lover walked back with her to Newnham.

'You are sure there is nothing the matter?' the Master said before he left her; he didn't leave her at the gate, he went straight up to the door of Newe Hall with her. 'You are sure that the faintness is quite gone?'

'Yes,' she said, 'it is quite gone. It was only the heat and the smell of those horrid geraniums.'

This was rather hard on the Master, as he had gathered them together for her benefit.

There were still traces of tears on her cheeks when she got back to Newnham, and her eyes were

red, and everybody could see she had been crying. Maria Stubbs saw her coming up the path with the Master, and she saw in a moment, directly she came into the hall, that there was something amiss. Nothing escaped Maria.

She followed Lucy into her room and shut the door behind her.

'You have heard, then?' she said.

Lucy noticed that she spoke in a more subdued tone than was usual to her, and there was a catch in her voice that jarred upon her ear.

'Heard what?' she said wearily. 'I have only just come back from the lodge. I have heard nothing.'

She was not very anxious to hear Maria's news. She thought it was one of the old things that was always happening: someone had passed an exam., or someone had been plucked, or someone had broken down. She was so used to these things that she did not care a straw which it was, and she began drawing off her gloves, and threw her hat

down on a chair. When she had done this she became aware that Maria was looking at her with a strange pity in her eyes.

'And you have not heard?' she said with a little hard break in her voice.

'I have heard nothing,' Lucy said impatiently.

'Oh, you poor dear! How can I tell you?'

Lucy looked at her startled and amazed, with a sudden terror in her eyes.

'It is about—about——'

Her lips grew suddenly white, and refused to pronounce the name of the man who for so short a time had been her lover.

'Yes,' Maria said softly, 'it is about Wyatt Edgell.'

'He—he—oh, don't say he is dead!'

Lucy fell on her knees beside the couch and clutched Maria's gown. She was white as a sheet, and her lips were quivering.

Maria Stubbs threw her arms around her, she

thought she would have fallen, but Lucy pushed her aside.

'Oh, don't tell me he is dead!' she moaned. 'Don't tell me I have killed him!'

'Hush!' Maria said almost fiercely, but her own eyes were full of tears, and her voice faltered as she spoke. 'It isn't your fault that he is dead. He would have died just the same whether you had given him up or not.'

She spoke to unheeding ears, for Lucy had fallen with a little cry to the floor.

She tried in vain to rouse her. Her face was perfectly colourless, and her lips were white, and she lay like a log where she had fallen.

Maria undid her dress and loosened the things about her throat, and threw some water over her face and hands, and then, finding she didn't revive at all, she got frightened and ran to get assistance. Pamela Gwatkin was the only girl who was in her room at that hour, and Maria implored her to come at once.

Pamela was sitting with her hands clasped before her and an open letter in her lap. She looked up when Maria came in with a bewildered look in her eyes, which were heavy with weeping.

'You must not ask me,' she said harshly; 'I would not put my hand out to save her. You must ask someone else. I can never, never forgive her!'

If Pamela could not find it in her heart to forgive the girl who had ruined Wyatt Edgell's life, it was harder for Lucy to forgive herself.

As she lay tossing with fever in her little darkened room for weeks after that miserable day, she reproached herself a thousand times for having murdered her lover. The shock of Wyatt Edgell's death had told on her already overwrought nervous system, and it had given way, and she had been struck down with brain-fever.

It was not an unusual thing in a women's college.

No one but Pamela Gwatkin and Maria knew the real cause; everyone else, doctors and all, put it

down to overwork—to the mathematics she was getting up for the Little-go.

Nobody attached any meaning to her wandering, not even when in her delirium she called herself a murderess; she didn't mince matters, she shocked Cousin Mary by declaring that she was a murderess. She was for ever raving about that dreadful scene, when she had found Eric Gwatkin on his knees beside the couch, and in her dreams she was ever helping him to sew up that awful wound. She couldn't get that gaping wound out of her eyes.

Nurse Brannan came over from Addenbroke's to Newnham to nurse Lucy. Perhaps she could have thrown some light on the girl's wanderings, but she was silent. She nursed her back to life, and soothed her and comforted her in the first wild abandonment of her grief and remorse, as she had comforted the old Master. She had only one kind of medicine for all the diseases of the mind. She had only one set of old-fashioned remedies. She read Lucy in those first weak days of convalescence

the same, the self-same, words from the same old Book that she had come upon her reading to the Master at the lodge. She had only one story to tell to all her patients—an old, old story. It seemed quite new to Lucy as she sat listening to it in those weak, tired days; it seemed to her that she had never heard it before.

When she was well enough to talk about anything, Lucy insisted upon talking about the subject that was uppermost in her mind. Nurse Brannan let her have her way; she could not have stopped her if she would.

'You have nothing to reproach yourself with, my dear,' she said to her when she found there was nothing to be gained by silence; 'it would have happened in any case. With that tendency and that awful heritage, you could not have prevented it.'

Then Lucy learned, what she had only surmised before, that Wyatt Edgell had died by his own hand.

'You must tell me how it happened,' she said, 'and who was with him; you must not conceal anything.'

'There is very little to tell, dear. Eric Gwatkin was with him. He could not have had a truer or more devoted friend.'

'No,' said Lucy with a sigh; 'he loved him more than I loved him; he would have laid down his life for him.'

'Yes, I think he would. They were away alone together in Scotland, on some shootings that Mr. Edgell had taken, when it happened. He had been moody and out of sorts for several days, and had stayed indoors wrestling with his disease. Eric did not leave him day or night during this dreadful time, and on the fourth day the temptation seemed to have passed, and he went out on the moors. Eric was with him alone when it happened; there was no keeper near. It was all over, and—and he was quite dead when the keeper came up. There was only Eric to witness that it

was not an accident. Oh, he behaved splendidly! He did everything. He brought the dear fellow back to his people; he covered up all the dreadful part of the story; and no one—no one belonging to him—will ever know that it was not an accident. It would have broken his mother's heart; it would have killed his old father, who was so proud of him; it would have been a crushing blow. Oh, Eric was quite justified—it must have cost him a great deal to cover it up, but he was quite justified; he behaved splendidly!'

When Lucy got well enough to see anyone, the first person she saw was the Master of St. Benedict's. He had inquired for her every day during her illness, and he had sent daily messages by Mary. He reproached himself for letting her walk back on that last day he had seen her. He ought to have known that she had broken down when she fainted in the greenhouse.

He was not at all prepared for the change in her. She had not only grown thin and white, but her

eyes had changed; they were graver and steadier, and something that used to be there, he didn't know what, had gone out of them.

'The lodge is quite finished,' the Master said cheerfully, as he took his seat by her side; 'your home is quite ready for you, my dear.'

Then Lucy had to say to him what she had sent for him to say. It was rather difficult to say, and she said it in her little weak, faltering voice.

'I have found out,' she said, 'while I have been lying here, that I have made a mistake. It is not the first mistake I have made—and—and thank God I have found it out in time!'

Her voice broke, and her lips quivered, and a faint flush of colour came into her cheeks.

'We have all made mistakes, my darling,' the Master said, stroking her little thin hand that lay on the coverlet. 'Don't let this little mistake you have made, or fancy you have made, trouble you; you have all your life to set it right. You have

only to get well as fast as you can; your new home is ready, quite ready, for you.'

Lucy shivered.

'That is it,' she said eagerly; 'I want you to help me to set it right. I have ruined one man's life; I will not ruin another. I—I want you to give me up.'

She did not tell him she was not worthy, she knew that would be of no avail; she only asked him to give her up.

'You do not love me, Lucy?' he said reproachfully, when he found that all other arguments failed to move her.

'No,' she said sadly, 'I do not love you enough. I never, never could love you enough to marry you for yourself. I should have married you for—for the sake of your position—it is a great thing to be mistress of a college lodge—and, and I wanted a home, and to be taken care of—and loved—and I had nothing to give in return.'

It took a long time to convince the Master of St.

Benedict's that Lucy hadn't accepted him for himself. He hadn't looked in the glass lately, or his eyes had grown dim—he hadn't seen that the brown locks of his youth were turning gray, and that he was getting bald, and fat, and florid. There were plenty of women in the world who would have loved him for himself still; there was a dear woman in the adjoining room who had loved him for twenty years, and who would go on loving him in spite of his baldness—who rather preferred it, indeed.

The Master couldn't conceal from himself that the girl really desired to be free. Her words, her eyes, her manner, all showed him that she desired to break off her engagement. He had no alternative but to give her the release she sought.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A COLLEGE 'PERPENDICULAR.'

A WHOLE year had passed. There was quite time enough in a year for things to straighten themselves—for things that had gone wrong to get right again.

One thing that had once threatened to go wrong —very wrong—had righted itself. The new mistress of the lodge of St. Benedict's was in her right place.

The lodge had taken months to restore and refurnish, and the work had been carried out quite regardless of expense. It only wanted one thing when it was finished—a mistress to preside over its stately hospitality.

The Master had not far to go to find one. He did not go so far as Newnham College; he found what he sought at an unpretentious little house in the village, furnished with very shabby old furniture.

He ought to have been ashamed of himself to have gone back to Mary. No doubt he was ashamed, dreadfully ashamed; but he went back, nevertheless. He did what is always the wisest and the noblest thing to do; he went back and confessed his folly, and asked to be forgiven. He did not ask in vain.

Mary is now the most popular mistress of a college lodge in Cambridge, and the handsomest. She has grown quite young again; the ordeal she has passed through has only added a tender, pathetic nobleness to her beautiful grave face. The hope of her youth, of her mature womanhood, is fulfilled. She cannot help looking prosperous and handsome.

And Lucy? Well, Lucy went back to Newnham when she was well enough—when she had quite

recovered—and passed the Little-go with distinction. She worked at her Tripos all through the next year, and Pamela Gwatkin was her coach. She was about as unhappy as a girl with a 'small soul,' as she still described herself, would be, after what she had gone through; but her mathematics diverted her thoughts, and the prospect of her coming Tripos sustained her.

At the end of the year an event happened which affected Lucy's views on the subject of her Tripos; that cut short, in a not wholly unprecedented way, her University career.

At the close of the October term, the Master of St. Benedict's gave what is known in undergraduate parlance as a 'Perpendicular.'

At this particular 'Perpendicular' all the Dons and Donesses in Cambridge were present to do honour to the new mistress of the lodge, and the whole suite of reception-rooms, that had been the subject of such heartburnings to Lucy, were thrown open.

It was the first time that she had ever seen them lit up and filled with such a goodly company. She was there with Maria Stubbs and Pamela Gwatkin, as her cousin's guests. She had not altered much during the year; only her eyes were steadier, and she did not blush so readily.

She ought to have been blushing now, for she had just met an old friend who had taken her hand when they met and had forgotten to give it up again.

It was Pamela Gwatkin's brother.

He was in Orders now; he had been ordained nearly a year, and held a curacy in a village in the West-country, with the magnificent stipend of one hundred and fifty pounds a year.

He had gone through all the familiar rooms of the old lodge with Lucy, but he had hardly recognised them again. Only in the long gallery the faces of the old Masters looked down on him as of old, with a stately welcome in their grave eyes.

He had no idea that the dark, musty old place could have been so changed. He passed through room after room, with Lucy's arm in his; and presently, when she was tired, he sat down in the deep-recessed window of the oak-panelled saloon, where the Masters hold their annual feasts and eat their state dinners.

Full-length portraits of old Masters and Fellows hung on the walls, and above their massive gilded frames—they had been regilt lately—a rich carved frieze of oak went round the room; and above the great open fireplace was a quaint carven mantelpiece that was a sight to see. It was a room to delight the soul of an antiquary.

Lucy watched Pamela's brother as his eyes travelled round the room and took in all these things. He was such a simple, transparent fellow that she could not help reading his thoughts.

'What are you thinking of, Eric?' she asked him presently. She called him Eric.

'I—I?' he said, with a blush. 'I was wonder-

ing why you gave up this — how you *could* give up this!'

'Did you wonder?' she said softly, and her eyes, he saw, were very sweet and tender. He thought she lingered on the 'you,' and he looked at her with a strange trouble in his eyes.

'Yes,' he said with a sigh, 'I don't think many women would have—have given this up lightly. You must have had a reason?'

'Yes,' she said in her low voice, with a quiver in it, and that droop of her pretty mouth that he remembered so well; 'I had a reason.'

Something in her manner more than in her voice struck him, and the trouble in his eyes deepened.

'May I know—will you tell me the reason, Lucy?' he said hoarsely.

'I could tell anyone but you,' she said passionately, and then she turned away her face from him, but not before he had seen that her eyes were full of tears.

Then a strange light came suddenly into his eyes as he looked at her as she sat there in her soft white clinging gown, with her bosom heaving, and the rich colour sweeping over her neck and face.

'You do not mean—— Oh, Lucy!' he said, and his voice shook, and the trouble in his eyes gave place to the light of a sudden wild hope.

Whatever she meant, it was whispered so low that it reached no other ear than his.

Before Lucy went back to Newnham that night with her friends she had a little interview with her beautiful hostess. Cousin Mary looked like a queen with her gleaming jewels and her rich dress.

It was not a dress intended to be crushed; it was intended to be put away carefully, and to be worn at no end of grand University receptions and dinner-parties; but Lucy threw herself upon it in the most unfeeling way, and let her foolish tears—they always flowed very copiously—stream

down the beautiful satin bosom and over the lovely real lace.

'Oh Mary, congratulate me,' she murmured; 'I am going to marry Eric Gwatkin!'

She was going to marry a curate with one hundred and fifty pounds a year. She had thrown over the Master of a college, and she was asking Cousin Mary to congratulate her!

* * * * *

What can be expected of the children of such a union? They will neither be beautiful nor clever. Probably in a generation or two they will go back to the low estate from which they sprang, and another Lucy may keep the old family stall in the butter-market. Heredity has so many vagaries it is not safe to predict.

The success of the old Master may repeat itself in the male line, and another Anthony—Lucy's boy is called Anthony—may occupy with equal distinction as a Church dignitary another stall elsewhere.

Who can tell?

Meanwhile Lucy is famous for her poultry, and, like her distant progenitor, prides herself on the excellence of her dairy.

THE END.

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